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of Sport, Story and Adventure

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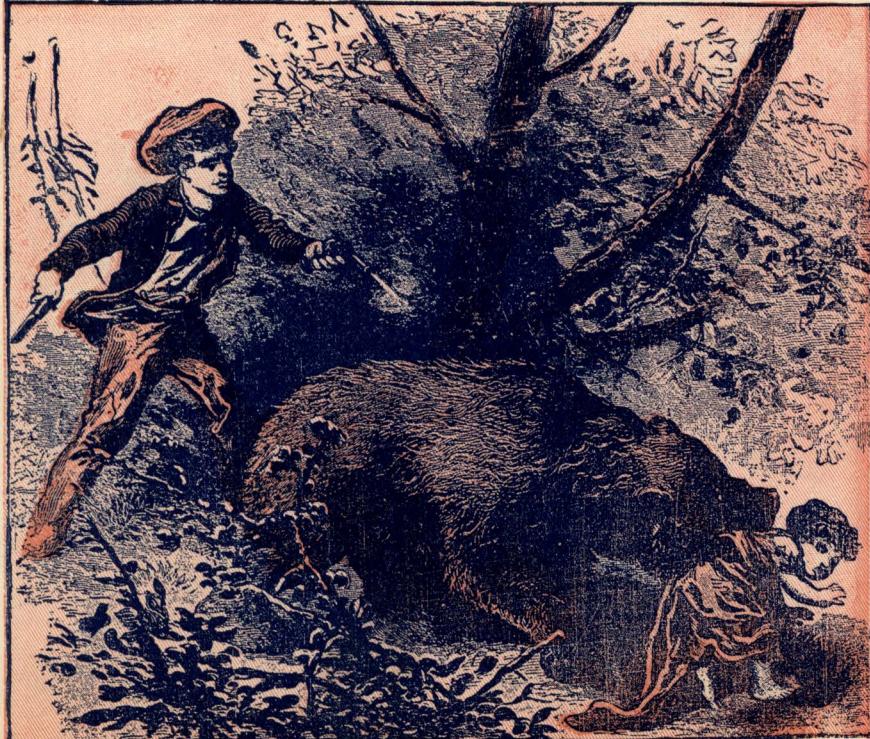
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Vol. I.

WILD BILL, the Pistol Prince.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



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Vol. I.

WILD BILL, the Pistol Prince.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



BOLDLY HE RAN AFTER THE BRUTE, CAME WITHIN PISTOL RANGE, AND, CONFIDENT IN HIS UNERRING AIM, FIRED.

Wild Bill, THE PISTOL PRINCE.

From Early Boyhood to his Tragic Death.

Deeds of Daring, Adventures, and Thrilling Incidents in the Life of J. B. Hikok, Known to the World as Wild Bill.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "ADVENTURES OF BUFFALO BILL,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE HERO.

In a small log-cabin, a story and a half high, situated on the edge of a timber-island, in the State of Illinois, and upon the banks of Vermilion Creek, was born in the year 1837 James Butler Hikok, who, by the strange nomenclature of the border, won from his comrades in after years the name of Wild Bill.

Sketches innumerable, poems, and novels have been written of the marvelous man who has won the above strange sobriquet, and well knowing that his thrilling adventures will furnish material enough to interest all classes of readers, I give in the following pages incidents of daring, peril and romance, which are worthy of the belief that truth is stranger than fiction.

Even in his earliest boyhood Wild Bill won a name for daring, fearless horsemanship and a crack boy marksman, and his early training served him well in after years.

For fire-arms he had a passion, and he set himself to work at eight years of age, to possess as his own a pony, rifle, pistol and knife.

Busy with the affairs of his farm, and the improvement of his new home, then in the wilds of the Far West, as was Illinois at that time, Mr. Hikok had little time to watch the growing hero in his household, and to all his begging for a pistol and a pony, put him off from day to day, until young Jim—for it must be remembered that he did not win the name of Wild Bill until he had reached man's estate—determined to procure those necessary, as he believed, properties to a border boy's comfort and education.

How to set about it he did not exactly know; but an idea was suggested to him by hearing his father and a neighbor discussing the circumstance of the State having offered a premium for the scalps of wolves, as those

animals had become so destructive to the cattle of settlers.

Watching his opportunity, when the family were away from home one day, Jimmy set to work with hatchet and nails, and soon constructed some distance from the cabin a most unique pen of a double character as a trap in which to catch wolves.

It was so constructed that there was a pen within a pen, and the inner one was to be used as a receptacle for his bait, and the outer one as the trap.

Jimmy made them both remarkably secure, for the strength of the inner one the life of his pet pig depended upon, and the outer one must be strong enough to hold the game when caught.

Jimmy had a pet pig a neighbor had given him, and this little animal was taken down to his trap and securely fastened up within the inner pen, and the trap was so set that when the wolves went in under the log outer pen to interview piggy, down would come the log cage over them.

Jimmy's pig did not seem to relish the affair, evidently believing, when he saw the contrivance, that he was to be used as a cat's paw; but he was feasted well, and then his young master retired to await results.

Hardly had Jimmy gotten a quarter of a mile away toward the house, when piggy began to squeal at a rate that touched the boy's heart, and he determined to go back and release him and use his mother's pet cat for bait; but upon his arrival he saw that the trap had fallen, and if the pig was frightened to death, nearly, in the interior, there were three wolves equally as alarmed at being captives in the outer department.

For just such a climax Jimmy had prepared by fastening an old bowie knife into the end of a strong pole, and he went to work with such good will that he soon massacred the wolves and returned in triumph to his cabin, so elated with his success that he forgot the woes of the pig in his delight at having laid the foundation of his fortune, which was to purchase for him a pony, rifle and pistol.

With his three scalps he sought his father upon his return and told him of his wolf-trap, and Mr. Hikok was so delighted that he at once went with Jimmy to see his machine.

As they drew near, the squealing of the pig told Jimmy that he had made another capture, and, discovering two more wolves in his trap, he showed his father his *modus operandi* of ending the lives of the beasts and scalping them.

The result of this trap was that Jimmy soon got enough money from his scalps to buy his pony, saddle and bridle, a small rifle, pistol and bowie-knife, and he considered himself made, and at once released piggy from his

seeming peril, determined to hunt for wolves in a more manly way.

Before proceeding further we may relate the following true episode as indicative of the boy's good nature and his wonderful courage.

It was just after he entered his teens that he went with some neighbors to a distant ranch to drive back a herd of cattle.

The afternoon of their arrival the party had put up at a small tavern, the proprietor of which had a feeling of ill-will against the father of Jimmy Hikok, and which his wife also joined him in.

The merits of the case Jimmy knew little about, other than that all had insisted in saying that his father was right, and the tavern proprietor wrong.

Upon this score, however, the tavern-keeper deemed himself in the right, and, learning that the boy was a son of his old enemy, refused to permit him to remain at his tavern.

This troubled the youth but little, for he went to the woods near by, threw himself up in a brush shelter, and, having provisions, was cooking his evening meal with the utmost unconcern, when he heard screams toward the tavern.

Instantly he ran in that direction, and discovered all in a wild state of confusion, for a huge bear had run down from the hills, taken the baby-girl of the tavern keeper from the door-step, where it lay asleep, and ran off with it.

Most of the men living at the place were away, getting up the cattle, and the few who were there began to organize a hunt for the ferocious beast, having no hope of saving the child; but Jimmy Hikok armed only with his pistols and knife, at once started in pursuit, the terrified mother showing him in which direction the bear had gone.

Jimmy was fleet of foot, and possessed wonderful powers of endurance, and set off at a swift run, which soon brought him in sight of the bear.

In his mouth, his teeth firmly holding the clothes, the bear carried the infant, which was screaming with fright. Instantly Jimmy determined to attack the beast, making him drop his prey and turn on him.

Boldly he ran after the brute, came within pistol range, and, confident in his unerring aim, fired.

The bear gave a savage growl, and at once sprung forward with greater speed. The boy saw that he limped, and exerting himself the more, loading as he ran, now drew quite near, and stopping suddenly, again fired.

This time the beast dropped the screaming infant, and savagely turned upon his young foeman.

But, nothing daunted, the brave youth kept advancing toward him, loading as he went, and

soon was upon him, when he halted, and almost at arm's length fired fairly in the face of the huge monster, as he stood upon his hind legs. Bruin dropped at the shot, but only for an instant, and then rose and savagely rushed upon the boy.

But again the youth met him, this time with the one pistol he had loaded, still grasping the other into which he had only had time to throw some powder.

Perfectly calm he had the presence of mind to aim for the eyes of the brute, and with such good result that he blinded Bruin, and again dropped him, just as the crowd of men from the tavern came in sight.

Blinded, wounded, and mad with rage and pain, the beast tried to get hold of his foe; but Jimmy kept out of reach, at the same time loading his pistols once more, and again gave him their contents, which there and then ended the monster's life, while he bounded forward and raising the still shrieking child in his arms, gave it to its father, who just then came up.

One glance was sufficient to show the father that, excepting a few scratches and a fearful fright, the baby was not injured, and then he turned to Jimmy, and said with trembling voice :

"My boy, you've got your revenge on me, so don't spare me."

"I didn't want any revenge, sir: it wasn't my quarrel, and you knew best who you wanted in your house, and I didn't mind roughing it out doors," was Jimmy's answer.

"Forgive me, boy, and come back with me, and the best I've got you'll be welcome to, and I'll bury the hatchet between the old man and myself. Come, Jimmy, come, pard's, we'll go back and have a good time, and I'll dress the bear-skin for you, boy, as a reminder of what you've done this day."

And back to the tavern they went, and there ever after Jimmy Hikok was the favored guest.

After the success of his wolf-baiting had provided Jimmy with all the necessary equipments of the hunter, he could not stay at home.

Armed with his weapons, and mounted upon Beauty, as he named his truly fleet and handsome pony, Jimmy scoured the country for half a hundred miles around, frequently remaining alone at night in the forests or on the prairie, knowing no fear, and building up a constitution and nerve that were to serve him well in after years.

His parents were anxious to have him attend school, and sent him to a teacher living many miles away, where he soon laid the foundation of an education, which never in after life was he able to continue, as far as books went, though ever was he a student of nature and human nature.

Duty elsewhere calling the teacher away,

Jimmy, at the age of fourteen, took to the tow-path on the Illinois and Michigan canal, and here he saw the first serious adventure of his life, when in his fifteenth year, and which will be related in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE CANAL BUCCANEERS.

WHILE on the tow-path of the canal, Jimmy Hikok became a very popular youth with all with whom he came in contact; but he was undemonstrative and rather taciturn in his nature, doubtless having become so from his many days and nights of solitude in the prairie and forest, and trotting along behind the canal-boat horses, or riding them, and having no one to speak to for hours at a time.

One night when the boat was in "port," and ready to draw out at daybreak, he lay asleep in his bunk, when he was awakened by voices in the cabin.

What he heard was no more than a plot of several men, with the captain of the boat, to attack it the following night, at a desolate spot on the canal, rob it of some treasure of the company which it would carry, and, escaping with their booty, to share all round.

Jimmy was horrified at the rascally plot, and determined, as soon as the men left the cabin, to get up and make the affair known; but to his alarm they had just departed, when he was called up to go ahead with his horses, and the boat was pulled out on her trip, it being at a lonely place on the canal, and no one near to call upon, for the captain had distinctly said that two of his "hands" were with him, and for the cook and the two path boys he did not care.

Jimmy plodded along, thinking how he could circumvent the canal buccaneers, and at last came to the conclusion that he would make the attempt at any rate.

He knew the spot chosen for the robbery well, and he would be on the tow-path at the time, and had heard their plan to stop him, tell him they were passengers who wished to get on board, and then they were to seize him, halt the horses, board the boat and bind the captain and crew, and after securing the treasure, drive away in the vehicle in which they had come to the canal.

Having formed his plan, when relieved from duty, as was his wont, Jimmy remained a few moments with the boy who was his tow-path partner, and very little questioning showed him that he would be his ally at any rate.

Going on board, Jimmy looked at a new purchase he had made with the money earned on the tow-path.

It was a Colt's revolver, and at that time an uncommon weapon, and he was as proud of it as he could be.

Loading it carefully, with his single-barreled pistols, the one the wolf's scalps had bought for him, he laid it in his trunk, and then sought rest.

Late in the afternoon he arose and again went on the path, telling his partner of his plan.

"Buck," he said, "the captain and the two hands are in the job, and just before I come on to-night I'll manage to get them into the hold together, under the excuse of a bad leak in the hull, and then I'll just shut 'em up there, and you can guard 'em while I go on the path."

"I'm a good shot, as you know, and when those three men come up to seize me, I'll just open on them with my Colt's, and then we'll have fun, you bet."

"But they may kill you, Jimmy," suggested Buck.

"Guess not; but I've got to take those chances, Buck, and mind you, I leave you the single-barrel pistols, and if old Skillets, the cook, puts on any airs, just nail him, for this boat has got thirty thousand dollars on her belonging to the company, and we've got to save it from the pirates."

Thus it was arranged, and as cool as an icicle was Jimmy when he was awakened to take his trick on the path.

He went forward, and, calling to the captain and two men, said he felt confident that there was a leak in the hold, as he could hear the water running.

Getting lanterns, the three men hastily descended into the hold, and instantly Jimmy closed the trap upon them and bolted it.

Skillets, the cook, was asleep, and Jimmy called to his pard:

"Buck, I have 'em caged, so pull in and we'll change."

"Ay, ay!" called back Buck, and in ten minutes more he was walking the canal boat deck, the pistols Jimmy had given him in his hands, and listening to the muffled curses and hammering of the captain and his crew below.

The noise soon brought Skillets out of his bunk, and he sided with the captain and crew, and picked up an ax with which to attack Buck, who instantly called to Jimmy for aid, as he began to weaken.

Jimmy yelled back to him to run the boat close inshore, and, as he jumped on board, Skillets made for Buck, but was met by the youth of whom he stood something in awe.

Putting his revolver down on the deck, and telling Buck to still keep at the helm, Jimmy ran in upon Skillets, and at once a savage fight began for mastery.

The boy was tall, wiry, as active as a panther, quick as a flash, and very strong for his age; but Skillets was a stout-bodied man, and the two rolled over and over the deck together until they went overboard into the canal.

Buck, in alarm, stopped the boat by running it in to the shore, and ran to the side to see the fight, which still continued fiercely in the water.

It was Jimmy who had thrown himself overboard, dragging Skillets with him, as he felt he was the stronger on a solid surface, and knew he could master him in the water.

But Skillets fought with fury, and yet slowly failed in strength, until Jimmy at last felt his hold relax.

"Here, Buck, throw me a rope, and we'll draw him on deck," said the youth, and, fastening it around the body of the man, he drew himself up on the canal-boat, and then the two hauled the body on board.

"Now let us move on, Buck, so get the team started while I change for a dry suit."

This did not take many minutes, and, armed with his revolver, Jimmy was soon mounted on the lead horse, while Buck guided the boat up the canal.

"Sing, Buck, to drown the voices of that caged gang," called out Jimmy, and Buck did as requested, and along the dark canal the boat moved, the voice of the youth starting many echoes in the dark and dismal forests.

At last the spot selected as the scene for the attack of the buccaneers, was just ahead, and Jimmy drew a long breath and his revolver at the same time.

Suddenly two men came in sight, and one of them called out:

"Hold on, towboy, we want to get on board."

"I can't stop," said Jimmy.

"By Heaven you shall; knock him off with your stick, Sam," cried the man.

It was the intention of Sam to obey, but suddenly a flash illuminated the darkness of the forest, and the man fell dead, while the other instantly fired upon Jimmy.

Down went the horse he rode; but the youth nimbly caught on his feet, and a second, third and fourth shot was rapidly fired by him, and in his tracks, as he turned to fly, fell the second robber.

Bounding forward into the road, which crossed the canal by a bridge a little way above, Jimmy found a carriage there, to which were hitched two horses, and their driver was endeavoring to curb their fright, and turn them into the road as if to fly.

But Jimmy ran close up to him and said:

"Hold on, for I want you too."

"Don't shoot!" yelled the man.

"Then get out."

"I'll do it."

"Ho, Buck! come here!" cried Jimmy, in a loud tone.

Buck had been alarmed greatly at the shots, but hearing Jimmy's voice at once sprung on shore, and coming up the driver was quickly

disarmed, for he carried a pistol, and securely bound.

Then the dead man, the first Jimmy had shot, the wounded one, who was the second he had fired on, and the prisoner, were carried on board, and the two youths set to work to resume their way, having hitched the carriage horses to the tow-line.

The wounded man was dying, it was evident, and Jimmy took the tow-path and hastened on, while Buck held the tiller, and in a couple of hours' time they reached a village, where they reported what had happened.

The constable and justice came down and released the captain and his men from the hold, and as the driver had confessed all, they were taken to prison, while the bodies of the two buccaneers, for the second had died, were buried, Skillets having revived in time to prevent their burying him as a dead man.

For this adventure Jimmy was made captain of a canal boat, though but fifteen, and presented with a purse by the company; but as canal buccaneers were scarce, and he longed for adventure, he soon after left for other scenes, for danger was to him a pleasure.

CHAPTER III

SHANGHAI BILL.

In his search for fields of adventure Jimmy naturally turned his gaze toward Kansas and Missouri, then the scenes of a border warfare growing from incipiency to the size of a giant as the weeks progressed.

He had, after leaving the canal, gone home for a visit, and remained there for quite a while, aiding his father and brothers on the farm; but with what money he had, he concluded to set out for St. Louis, and after a sojourn of a year in that busy city, took a steamer to Leavenworth, Kansas, where he arrived at time when the excitement, consequent to making the State open to slavery, was at its height.

His first landing in Kansas convinced him that he had struck the right field of adventure, for a fight was in progress as he went ashore, which ended in the death of a number of the participants.

Failing in an effort to secure employment at once, Jimmy sought to enlist himself with the "Red Legs," an anti-slavery command under the leadership of the noted Jim Lane.

This band numbered some three hundred men, all thoroughly armed and mounted; but not having the wherewithal to purchase a horse and complete equipment, he was refused as a Red Leg Ranger, greatly to his distress.

But a few days after the Red Legs went out on the commons to shoot with rifles and pistols for prizes, and Jimmy determined to ring in if he could.

To attract attention, when any one shot and did not drive the bull's-eye, he laughed in a satirical way, until at last one of the Red Legs turned fiercely upon him and said:

"Look a heur, boy, you has too much laugh, as ef you cu'd do better, an' curn my skins, ef yer hain't a Red Leg, I'll give yer a chance ter shoot.

"Ef yer takes ther prize, I'll pay yer put-up dust, an' ef yer don't, I'll take the hickory ramrod o' my rifle an' welt yer nigh ter death.

"Does yer shoot on my tarms?"

"I will, and beat you too," was the quiet response.

All eyes had been turned on the tall, handsome youth before, and several had determined to try his mettle, after the shooting, for having laughed at them, and now they gazed on him with increased interest, from the cool maner in which he asserted his superiority as a marksman.

There were three prizes, viz:

A fine horse, saddle and bridle for the first; a rifle, and belt with two revolvers and a bowie knife for the second, and a purse of one hundred dollars for the third.

Jimmy had some little money, and said quietly:

"I'll pay the fees, for I want no man to give me money."

"Then shell out; it's fifteen fer ther first, ten fer ther second, and five dollars fer ther third prize, an' ther boys hes all chipped in, an' ef yer don't win, boy, they'll all see me larrup yer."

The speaker, Shanghai Bill, all knew, and greatly feared, for he was a desperado of the worst type, a giant in size and strength, and ever ready to get into a brawl.

Jimmy smiled at his words, paid his thirty dollars, which left him with three in his pocket, and after the Red Legs had shot took his stand and raising his rifle quickly, fired.

The first to start the cheer was Jim Lane himself, who cried out:

"By Heaven! the best shot in the three hundred."

"It's a accident; besides, general, thar's two more to be shooted," growled Shanghai Bill.

The two more were then shot in the same quick way as before, and the bullets found dead center.

"I've got the horse, saddle and bridle towards becoming a Red Leg, general," said Jimmy quietly, addressing Lane.

"You have indeed; now, see if you can win the arms, and egad, I believe you can," was Lane's reply.

These were to be shot for with pistols, and at twenty paces, the best two in three shots, and once more Jimmy scored three dead center bull's-eyes.

The men now became deeply interested in

the tall, handsome youth, and watched eagerly for him to come to his third trial, which was to be with a rifle at a moving object, a hundred yards off.

This object was a round piece of wood, painted red, which was to be rolled, like a wheel, along the ground, and at it three shots were given.

Just as the man who rolled it started it in motion, a crow flew over the field above the heads of the crowd, and instantly raising his rifle Jimmy fired, and brought him down, while he immediately seized the weapon held by Shanghai Bill and throwing it to a level, sent a bullet through the red wheel ere it had stopped rolling.

This double feat, and one shot with a strange rifle, set the crowd wild with enthusiasm, while it only angeved Shanghai Bill who growled forth:

"You has done ther shootin' squar', an' won all ther prizes, pard; so yer escapes ther lickin' on *that* score; but yer hes tuk a liberty with my rifle I never allows, an' I'll jist tan yer hide fer that."

"Lay your hand on me and I'll kill you," was Jimmy's calm response.

But Shanghai Bill at once replied:

"I guess I'll slit yer ears, so as I'll know yer ag'in," and he drew his knife. "Keep off!" and Jimmy stepped backward, while he dropped his hand on his revolver.

"Oh! that's yer leetle game are it! Waal, I'll jine yer."

And the desperado drew his revolver; but it was the last act of his life, as square in the forehead went the youth's bullet, and the bully of the Red Legs was a dead man.

"Bravo for the boy! He's killed the Shanghai! What's yer name, my young feller?" yelled one of the men.

"Call me anything you please; I don't care," was the calm response.

"Then Shanghai Bill is yer handle, fer ther Red Legs can't git along without one o' ther name. Boys, this are new Shanghai Bill."

A wild yell greeted the announcement, and Jim Hikoz was at once enlisted as a Red Leg, and became known as Shanghai Bill, a name that clung to him until changed for that of Wild Bill.

CHAPTER IV. THE YOUNG RANGER.

DURING his time of service in the company of Jim Lane, as a Red Leg Ranger, Bill, as I shall now call him, performed many deeds of valor, and was pronounced by his commander the most daring man in his command.

Without going over his many deeds of daring and hair-breadth escapes as a young Ranger, I will refer to one incident that seems to show

his indomitable nerve, and at the same time that his heart was in the right place.

Upon one of his solitary rides, or scouts, Bill came to a pleasant home, where he asked shelter for the night, as he was feeling quite ill, the effects of a severe cold.

The permission was given, the host little dreaming that he was entertaining unawares the noted Shanghai Bill, the Red Leg Ranger, who, as a partisan on the other side he would have been delighted to capture.

The following morning when the host went to call Bill, he found him unable to rise, suffering as he was with a high fever and aches in every bone.

A doctor was sent for and he prescribed for the patient, and yet Bill continually grew worse and soon his life was despaired of; but his strong constitution caused him to at last rally and he recuperated rapidly, and at last got well enough to undertake the ride back into Kansas, and most warmly thanked his host and his family, who had been untiring in their nursing of the stranger.

Touched by their devotion to him, Bill said:

"I know not how to thank you for all you have done for me, but hope sometime to prove my appreciation."

The host replied:

"Do so, by sometimes showing a kindness to any of our side who may fall into your hands, Shanghai Bill."

"Ha! you know me?"

"Yes, for in your delirium you told us who you are. I had believed you a monster, from all reports, but now I know to the contrary; but, no matter what you were, you came here sick and we cared for you."

Bill was deeply affected by their kindness and dared not trust himself to reply, and shortly after took his leave. Upon his return to the Red Legs he told his experience, made known to each one of the command who the kind host was and where he resided, and begged him to always spare any of his property or himself, if it was in his power.

Some weeks after he boldly went to the pleasant farm-house again, to pass the night, and was received kindly, and thanked for many goodnesses shown them by the Red Legs raiding through.

A short while after a small party of his foes were found in Kansas, committing fearful outrages, and being captured, were about to be executed summarily, when Bill came upon the scene and suddenly recognized one, a handsome young man, as the son of his host.

"Boys, you must spare this one," he said quietly, and he cut the ropes that bound the pale, trembling youth.

"No, Shanghai Bill, we won't do it, not even for you, as this is a bad lot and he was caught with 'em," was the reply.

"Never mind; he shall not die, and I will answer for it that he won't be caught in such bad company again."

But all of Bill's entreaties were of no avail, as the Red Legs were determined to sacrifice the boy.

Seeing that begging would do no good, Bill offered to purchase the youth from his captors; but they were not to be prevailed upon, and seeing it he took another tack, and said calmly:

"Boys, I have asked you to spare this youth, and you refuse; I have offered to pay you a ransom for him and you won't receive it, and now I tell you frankly, and you know me, I think—you shall not kill this lad!"

"Shall not is big words, Shanghai," growled one.

"I'll back my words, Purdy."

"Guess you'll have to, for we won't give the boy up."

"Take him then, if you wish to die."

A man, bolder than the rest stepped forward and laid a heavy hand upon the youth's shoulder, when the arm, broken by a bullet, fell helpless at his side.

Instantly there were a dozen weapons drawn; but Bill placed himself in front of the youth, and with a revolver in each hand faced the crowd, and said calmly:

"Take him, pard, if you wish to."

But the leader of the captors did not desire trouble with Shanghai Bill, who was the most popular man in the command, and besides, he knew well Bill's deadly aim, and he said coaxingly:

"Come, pards, let us give him up to Bill, for he is but a boy anyhow."

"All right," was the general cry, for those in front of Bill's revolvers did not look happy.

"I thank you, gentlemen. Purdy, get the doctor to fix your arm up; go to the best hotel, and send the bills to me," and Shanghai Bill walked away with his young friend.

Arriving at his camp, he turned to the boy and asked:

"How is it you were with that gang of horse-thieves, house-burners and murderers?"

The youth seemed confused, and then answered:

"I sought to find you, and joined them merely to get into your lines, as they said they would make a raid into Kansas."

"But why to seek me?"

"Bill, do you not know me? I am not Hal Halstead, but his twin sister, Sophie."

Bill was astounded, for he now saw before him the lovely girl who had so kindly cared for him during his sickness, and who, loving him desperately, had disguised herself in her twin-brother's clothes, and come to join him.

But Bill did not love her, and frankly telling

her so, carried her back to her father's home with him, and there left her.

It was long months before he again visited the Missouri farm-hous', and when he did, he found that poor Sophie was sleeping in the village churchyard, her nature be'ng to idolize, rather than love, and loving the idol, it caused her to wilt away like a flower and at last die of a broken heart.

CHAPTER V.

BILL'S STRANGE PARD.

UPON leaving off his connection with the Red Legs, Bill went further West, and readily gained employment as a stage-driver from a point in Kansas to Santa Fe.

He had been a passenger on a coach which had been halted by road-agents, who had of late had things pretty much their own way.

But, though the driver's hands went promptly up at the stern order, "Throw up your hands," Bill had no idea of being robbed of the little he had, and riding on the box, he yelled out:

"Drive on, man, and run em down!"

But the Jehu had no such idea, and Bill laid the whip on the horses just as the shots came rattling at the couch, while he replied with his revolver and dropped two of the robbers.

The driver, however, fell from his box, shot through the heart, and seizing the reins in one hand, using his revolver with his other, and yelling like a wild Comanche, Bill ran the gantlet of the road-agents, who were unused to that style of procedure, and got through in safety with a large sum of money they had for the company to pay off its men.

Of course it was all reported in due form, and Bill was offered a position as driver, which he readily accepted, and it was noticed that his coach went through every time, where others were not so fortunate.

After he had been driving a few months, Bill one day picked up a strange passenger, who preferred to ride with him on the box.

Bill found him a quiet yet pleasant companion, handsome as a picture, very young and very sad-looking, and with a smile which he often said afterward was so mournful that he had rather see him cry than laugh.

Of his antecedents Bill could find out nothing, and he often wondered why such a refined, retiring youth had come to that wild country, where there seemed nothing in common to one of his traits.

To Bill's surprise the youth went back over the road with him, still occupying his seat by him on the box.

Again, on the trip out he was in his accustomed place, and after half a dozen trips he became known as "Bill's Strange Pard."

He always promptly settled his passage-

money, and seemed, as he said, to only take the trips for the ride.

Several times the road-agents had attacked the stage; but with Bill's usual good luck he had gone through, with the loss of a passenger, a wounded horse, and a few scratches.

In each case Bill's Strange Pard had drawn a weapon, and though not firing it, had scanned the road-agents' faces eagerly, as though searching for some one.

And one day that some one for whom he searched was found, for as the agents called a halt one afternoon in a lonely pass of the mountains, the strange passenger suddenly uttered a cry, just as Bill was about to rush through, and raising his weapon, fired.

The chief of the road-agents fell, and the young man was about to spring to the ground, but Bill seized him with a gripe of iron and drove on.

But the youth begged and implored him to let him go, and at last succeeded in releasing himself, as Bill had to take the reins in both hands, and sprung to the ground.

He lighted on his feet all right, and dashed back down the road and disappeared from sight.

Bill was no man to go back on a pard, and he had become attached to the youth, so at once came to a halt, and sung out:

"Pilgrims, you just wait a bit, and look after my team until I come back."

The passengers demurred, but Bill was determined, and taking off his leader, he threw himself upon his back and dashed back after his Strange Pard.

His coming at a gallop put the road agents to flight, all except one, he whom the Strange Pard had shot down, and he lay upon the roadside where he had fallen, and over him knelt the youth.

Bill dashed up, dismounted, and cried: "Look here, pard, what the devil did you play this trick for?"

The avenger turned upon him and said:

"Bill, I came here for a purpose, and I have kept an oath I made three years ago. This man won my love, deceived me, killed my old father who sought to avenge my wrongs, and fled. In male attire I have tracked him, and I have avenged my father's death and my wrong, for he is dead, as you see."

Bill did see, for the road-agent chief lay dead, and, as there was a reward on his head, he quickly shouldered him, carried him back to the coach, and putting him on top, was soon in readiness to proceed, the woman, as the Strange Pard was now known to be, silently mounting to her old seat.

As they drew near the station, she said:

"Do not betray me, Bill."

"Not I, little one!" was the prompt answer. The next day on the way back the Strange

Pard took her last ride with Bill, for she bade him farewell at the station, and the two parted, she giving him orders to collect the reward for the head of the road-agent chief and hold it until she sent for it.

He did collect it, but to the day of his death she had never sent for the reward, doubtless being satisfied with her revenge, and Bill never heard again of his Strange Pard.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIRIT OF THE CANYON.

WHILE on the Overland Stage Line Bill's drives between stations were several times changed, and once, owing to his splendid manner of going over the worst roads the darkest nights, without accident, and arriving on time, he was put on a mountain run, as the distance between posts was called.

He had not driven the new route more than once when he discovered that there was a good reason for the drivers not caring to go through the mountains at night.

This reason, which he discovered himself, for not a word of it was whispered to him, was on account of a lonely canyon through which he passed, being haunted by a ghostly horse and rider.

It seemed that a road-agent had been captured and hanged by the Vigilantes on a large tree that grew at the mouth of the canyon, and the man was buried at its foot, and each night, dating from a few weeks after the hanging, a spectral horse and rider was seen at the tree, and, waiting until the stage came in sight, would gallop before it through the canyon, and then mysteriously disappear.

Several times some courageous driver had endeavored to overtake the spirit by rapid driving; but it had always kept a certain distance in advance, and invariably at the other end of the canyon would disappear.

The dead road-agent had ridden in life a snow-white horse, and dressed in deep black, and so was this specter dressed in black, and his steed was white, as had been plainly seen on light moonlight nights.

The driver that went through in the daytime never saw the Spirit of the Canyon; but the one who drove at night, either be it light moonlight or dark and stormy, always saw the Spirit.

Bill, on his first trip through went by day several times to learn the road, and not a driver spoke to him upon the subject, even when he remarked with satire:

"You must be weak ribbon-holders, pards, on this end of the line, not to be able to drive that road with your eyes shut."

The first night drive he took he went through without difficulty.

The second night likewise, and he said

nothing of seeing anything out of the usual run.

The third night, just as he came near the canyon he quickened the pace of his team, while he remarked to himself:

"That is the third time I have jumped that fellow right there, and it looks strange. Come, pets, step along, and we'll give the dyspeptics inside a shaking up, and see if we can't catch up with that white horse."

On went the team, and yet the horseman kept the same distance in advance, and though Bill got the animals into a run and shook the stage so wildly the passengers thought it was a runaway, he did not gain on the specter.

"Well, that is curious," and putting on the heavy California brakes as he spoke, he drew the team to a standstill, and continued:

"I can't hear his horse's hoof-beats; it is curious."

Bill drove on once more and discovered that the strange rider turned off at the same place he had the two nights before, and when he went into the station he told the story of his seeing the mysterious horseman, and at once every tongue was loosened and he learned that the drivers had called it a spirit, and after seeing it several times got sick and died, or met with some accident.

"Bah! they were a superstitious set of fools, and I'll take my chances," was his contemptuous reply, and each night after that he saw the Spirit of the Canyon in good weather and storm.

One afternoon he asked an extra hand who was not on duty to drive for him that night.

"Not I, Bill, though I'll lend you money and do all I can for you," was the reply.

"Then drive for me, Dan, for I will go along too."

"Oh! then I'll do it."

"Well, you handle the ribbons, and I'll ride behind the stage on Bonny Bess, and when we reach the canyon and see the ghost, I'll go in chase while you drive on."

"Don't do it, Bill, for—"

"I will do it, Dan, so keep dark."

That night the stage rolled away from the station just at sunset, with Dan Righy on the box, and Bill, mounted upon his splendid mare Bonny Bess, and thoroughly armed, riding close behind the vehicle.

Some who knew his errand shook their heads; but Bill did not care, and kept Bess in a canter until the canyon was reached.

It was a bright moonlight night, and in that region the moon, and stars too, shine with uncommon brilliancy, and objects were plainly visible.

"Look, Bill!" cried Dan in a loud whisper, as the spectral horseman was seen to ride out from the shelter of the road-agents' tree, and dash into the canyon.

"Come, Bess!"

Like an arrow from the bow the splendid mare shot away from the stage at the call of her master, and began to gain upon the spirit horseman.

But only for an instant, as looking back the sable-clad rider discovered his pursuer, and away went the white steed.

"Come, Bess, don't let the spirit outrun you," cried Bill, and the noble beast strained herself to her utmost and began steadily to gain.

Then the sable arms of the rider were seen to rise and fall in the moonlight, and once or twice Bill caught the keen chirp of a descending lash.

At the end of the canyon the white steed was not fifty lengths in advance, but suddenly wheeled off to the left.

"Follow him, Bess," said Bill, as though addressing a dog, and although the white steed had disappeared from sight, the instinct of the pursuing animal led her hot on her trail into the dark forest.

Without touching the rein Bill allowed Bess to go on her own way, and soon the white steed came in sight again.

Out of the forest upon an open plateau went pursuer and pursued, and then Bill saw he was only twenty lengths away, and the rider was seen to be lashing his horse mercilessly.

"Aha, sir Spirit of the Canyon, you've got a good horse to play ghost with, but you didn't know Bonny Bess was in this part of the country," and then raising his voice he called out in a loud tone:

"Halt!"

But on the Spirit of the Canyon sped.

"Then take the consequences," muttered Bill, and his pistol flashed as he spoke.

At his shot the white steed gave a bound into the air, staggered forward a few paces, and fell at the very brink of a precipice, overhanging a mountain stream.

Down went his rider, and lay motionless, and springing to the ground as he drew up, Bill bent over him.

It was apparently a youth, of eighteen perhaps, with a slender form clad in black, and wearing a belt of arms.

He seemed dazed by the fall, but soon recovered and looked Bill in the face, while he said quietly:

"Well, do you intend to hang me, too?"

"Hang you? Why should I?"

"You hung Captain Kirk."

"Not I; I was not on the road then, if you mean the road agent chief the Vigilantes strung up."

"Yes, I mean Ed Kirk, my husband."

"Your husband?" asked Bill, in great surprise.

"Yes, he wrote another name than his own to a check, fled to keep out of prison, went

from bad to worst and I followed him, for I loved him.

"To revenge his death, by scaring all who travel these mountains at night, I have been playing ghost; but you are a brave man to follow me."

"Thank you; I am not so big a fool about spooks and spirits as the others, perhaps; but what do you wish to do?"

"I don't know, and I don't care; I live near here in a cave, and only wish to be let alone."

"You shall have your wish; but I advise you not to play ghost any more."

"I won't; good-night."

"Good-night!" and Bill mounted Bess and rode on after the stage.

But, pitying the woman he did not tell of his adventure, and when the next night he drove along the road, he failed to see the Spirit of the Canyon.

Some few weeks after, however, he was hailed by a pedestrian, and the slender form of the woman clambered to a seat by his side on the box.

"Well, we meet again?" said Bill.

"Yes, I am going East to my home, for I would go mad living here without poor Ed."

"Well, you want some money?" half-queried Bill.

"Oh, no; Ed made plenty while he lived, for you forget he was Captain Kirk, the road-agent."

"Ah, yes," assented Bill, and he drove on; but at the next station he parted with the strange, lonely woman, never to meet her again.

CHAPTER VII.

BILL BECOMES AN INDIAN-FIGHTER.

FROM the lower Overland route Bill gradually drifted northward, and while still driving stage, had some serious adventures with Indians who had become very troublesome along the whole line of road.

On one occasion a band of sixty red-skins "jumped" the stage just as it had crossed a small stream, and left the prairie, preparatory to ascending the foot-hills to the station, distant some eight miles.

At a glance Bill saw that he could not make it up the hill, and he wheeled his team of six horses short round and recrossing the stream, dashed out upon the open prairie.

The horses were good runners and went like the very wind, and keeping them on a straight course, he turned and raised his rifle, and fired at the nearest Indian.

Down dropped the red-skin, and a second shot sent down a mustang.

But this was only two out of sixty, and Bill knew that his team could not stand the kill-

ing pace at which they were going very much longer, and decided to use strategy.

Making a circuit to the right, as if to avoid a long and deep ravine in the prairie, he knew the Indians would head so as to cut him off, and he held on, seeing that they did so, until he got them away from behind him.

Then to the right about went his team, and upon the horses the lash fell, as they headed back for the foot-hills.

The Indians seeing that they were cleverly foaled, at once put for the creek at full speed.

But their horses seemed to be fatigued, and only about a dozen drew away from the main lot, and these Bill knew they must break through, so he called out to the passengers to be ready for the charge.

Right on the banks of the stream the redskins charged upon the stage, and with his reins under his feet, a revolver in each hand, and yell at his horses, Bill dashed into the stream.

There were wild yells, splashing of water, a fearful swaying of the stage, snorting of horses, and the rattle of firearms, and the coach had dashed through and was upon the hill-road with the redskins behind, and half-a-dozen of them dead, and as many mustangs, badly wounded, floundering in the water.

But Bill had been twice slightly wounded, one of his horses was shot in the neck, and in the stage, which had been fairly riddled with arrows, many of which still stuck in it, lay three dead men, passengers, while the other two did not escape scathless.

Back at the still pursuing redskins Bill opened with his rifle as the stage team, nearly tired out, climbed the hill, and thus kept them at bay until a party of mounted men, hearing the firing, came out from the station and put them to flight.

This daring gantlet of death, run with a team of six horses and a stage coach, added greatly to Bill's already famous name on the border, and caused him to be made captain of a company of drivers, stock-tenders, and Pony Express Riders, that were raised to fight the Indians, for, while they were on the war-path the stages had to be laid by, as all along the line the greatest depredations had been committed, Pony Riders killed, and many valuable horses belonging to the Overland Company had been run off.

Mounting and arming his men Bill started on the trail of the Indians, followed it to the Powder river, then to Crazy Woman's Fork, a stream that is frozen all winter and no stream at all in the dry summer, where it was found that all the raiding bands had consolidated.

CHAPTER VIII

BILL'S RED TRAIL.

WHEN the party under Bill's command discovered that the Indian bands had united, almost to a man they were unanimous in their desire to put back, as they did not number but a few over half-a-hundred horsemen while it was evident that the red-skins numbered over three hundred warriors.

But Bill promptly said:

"Pards, we have come here to punish the Indians, who have stolen the stock of the Overland, thus stopping the running of coaches and the Pony Riders, and we are going to do it, and recapture our horses, besides giving the reds a lesson that will last them."

Some argued that they would all be massacred, and Bill cut this argument short by threatening to kill any man or men, who turned the heads of their horses homeward without his orders.

All knew Bill, and preferred to take their chances against the Indians to certain death at his hands, and the march was begun once more.

Arriving in sight of the smoke of the Indian camp on Clear Creek, Bill called a halt, to rest his men and horses, and went on a scout alone.

After several hours he returned, ordered his men to mount, to fight only with their revolvers, and follow him.

He had already found, on his scout, where the corral of horses was, and sent a few men to that point, while, with the remainder he charged directly into the Indian camp, the pickets not seeing their foes until they were upon them, and little dreaming they were pursued, as they knew there were no soldiers in the country, and dreaded not an attack from the employees of the Overland.

As the amazed and frightened Indians rushed out of their tepees, they were shot down without mercy, and the fight soon became a perfect slaughter, and a few only escaped in the darkness to the forests and hills, leaving their village in the possession of the victorious whites, who, besides recapturing all of the stock of the Overland Company, took several hundred Indian ponies, which were safely taken back to the stations, where they became the property of their captors, and were gambled off again and again, until nearly every man of the expedition had been the possessor, at least for a few minutes, of every one of the mustangs.

This successful expedition, in which the redskins suffered so fearfully, was called Wild Bill's Red Trail, and added new laurels to his name, already so famous for deeds of desperate daring.

CHAPTER IX.

A DEATH STRUGGLE.

SHORTLY after his red trail raid against the Indians, Bill severed his connection with the Overland Stage Company, and became Brigade Wagon Master of a train of "Prairie Schooners" belonging to Russell, Majors and Waddell, and his line was to be between Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Independence, Missouri.

While on this road Bill met with an adventure that was as serious as any he had known in the past, and which nearly cost him his life.

It was not with renegade, desperado or red-skin that he was to grapple this time, but with a monarch of the mountains, a huge cinnamon bear.

Bill had ridden on ahead of the wagon train a few miles, and discovered in front of him on the trail a tremendous bear with her two cubs.

Instead of seeking safety in flight, Mrs. Bruin at once showed a maternal solicitude for her young, and a desire to contest the right of way with the bold horseman.

Bill knew that the cinnamon bear was even more dangerous than the grizzly, and yet he determined to attack that bear and kill it before the train came along.

He had with him his two revolvers and huge bowie-knife, and felt no dread of the result, and rode nearer to the animal to get a good shot, when, with a savage growl the brute showed her intention to force the fight-ing.

But his horse, alarmed at her charge and fierce growling, wheeled to fly, when checked suddenly by Bill, he sprung into the air, and falling backward, but for the agility of his rider, who caught on his feet, would have fallen upon him.

Unable to remount his horse, that scrambled to his feet and dashed away, Bill turned to meet his savage foe, and firing, struck the brute squarely in the head, but the bullet glanced, and only served to enrage her more.

Bill, however, nothing daunted, fired a second shot, and again hit the brute in the head, but, as all old hunters know, the skull of a cinnamon bear is almost impervious to a bullet.

This second shot made the bear mad with fury, and she sprung at her enemy, who fired a third shot that broke the bone of her fore-leg, as he had aimed to do.

But the bear reared on her hind legs, and grappled with the brave hunter, who would not fly, and a most desperate encounter followed, Bill sending another shot into her, and then seizing his bowie, and driving it with the full force of his iron arm into the huge body of the animal.

But the bear had not been idle the while,

for she had lacerated his shoulder with her teeth, and broken his left arm with one blow of her unwounded fore paw, while the claws seamed his broad breast with gashes.

But Bill never wavered, and again and again drove the knife home to the hilt, standing boldly up to the combat, and the blood of both man and beast reddening the earth.

At length a blow from the brute knocked Bill down, and in an instant she was on top of him, and his left arm was grasped in her teeth.

"Chew away, old lady, for this is the arm that does the work," shouted Bill, and he again drove his knife to the hilt, and fortunately this time touched the heart, the only vital spot, hunters in the Rocky Mountains say, in a cinnamon or grizzly bear.

It was Bill's last stroke, as he fell upon the body of the brute he had slain, fainting from loss of blood, and there his comrades found him when they came up in search of him, having hastened on from the fact of his horse coming back riderless to the train.

One of the wagon drivers had been a physician in early life, and Bill was put on a soft pallet in one of the vehicles, and this man dressed his wounds, and he was hauled to Santa Fe, where an army surgeon took charge of him.

But it was long months before he was himself again, and the scars he received in that desperate encounter, he carried to his grave with him, as he did also its remembrance with painful vividness.

CHAPTER X.

WINNING THE TITLE OF "WILD BILL."

WHEN Bill got well enough to resume work, he again went on the road with Messrs. Russell, Majors and Waddell, until tiring of slow train life, he left that service and went as Pony Express rider in Western Kansas.

Bill's ride was over a most dangerous and lonely piece of road, and at Rock Creek was his laying-off station, where the company had established a relay of horses, and put in charge of them a borderman by the name of Doc Mills, who always had for the Pony Rider a good meal upon his arrival after his long ride.

The station was a log hut of one room, and in this they slept, cooked and ate in bad weather, and in fair weather preferred to rough it outside.

It had a door, no window, and in fact was, in Western parlance, little more than a "dug-out."

Near the cabin were the stables, built of stout logs, and which were secure against an entrance of thieves, without a great deal of difficulty.

The nearest neighbor to this lonely ranch was five miles away, where dwelt an old, itinerant parson, who was in the habit of preach-

ing when he could get a few people together to listen to him.

Then, thirteen miles distant was a place known as the McCandless Ranch, where dwelt four brothers of that name, who were noted desperadoes.

This quartette of worthies one day, from some fancied wrong done them by the old parson, arrested him, bound him, and with a lariat around his neck, were taking him with them and threatening to hang.

As they passed the relay station Bill happened to be in, while Doe Mills, his comrade, had gone up the creek fishing.

Seeing the old man in trouble it excited Bill's sympathy, and he told the McCandless boys to release him; but they not only refused, but told Bill they would treat him worse than that some day.

"When you want me you'll find me," retorted Bill, and the quartette rode on with their prisoner.

Not liking the threat of the gang, and knowing they wanted to get the horses, if they could, Bill went into the cabin, and looked over his weapons, after which he locked up the stock and awaited the return of the party who had threatened him.

Doe Mills remained absent all the morning, and it was in the afternoon that Bill spied the McCandless quartette, accompanied by six more men as a reinforcement.

Finding the stable locked, they called to Bill to unlock it, and received a reply not at all complimentary to them, and they at once set to work to break in the door.

Bill warned them off, under pain of death; but, unheeding him, they raised a huge log, carried it with great force against the door of the log cabin, and in it was smashed.

Bill had stepped to the back of the dug-out, with a table before him, upon which lay his revolvers and bowie-knife, while in his hand he held a Mississippi *yager*, ready to fire.

The elder McCandless, the leader, sprung into the cabin first, a revolver in his hand, and fell dead on the threshold.

Dropping the *yager*, Bill seized his revolvers, and before his assailants could reach him laid three more of them dead before him.

The remaining six now rushed *en masse* upon him, and instantly the fiercest fight of a single man against overwhelming numbers on record began.

Bill fired with a revolver in one hand, and cut and slashed with his bowie-knife in the other, while the gang were equally as active, yet, having but one person to work upon, their shots and cuts were not as effective.

At one time Bill was down, and one of the McCandless boys sprung on him to finish him, when he got a bullet in his brain, and the des-

perate Pony Rider was again upon his feet, doing fearful work with his terrible knife.

Four men of the ten now remained, and two of these being badly wounded, they beat a hasty retreat from before the fearful being they had roused in fury, and he tottering from loss of blood, but game to the bitter end, followed them, and shot one as he mounted his horse, and, with a rifle wrested from Doc Miller, who just then came up, gave another a death wound, for he died after reaching the hamlet of Manhattan, some miles distant.

As his foes dashed away Bill sunk unconscious upon the ground, just as the Western-bound stage rolled up filled with passengers, among whom fortunately was an army surgeon, that at once set to work to try and save the border hero, while the others gazed around them with horror upon the blood-stained ground and sickening scene, for six men lay dead in the cabin and one a short distance away outside of the door.

It was a long time ere Bill was resuscitated, and no wonder, for the surgeon found upon him a fracture of the frontal bone of the skull, three fearful cuts in his broad chest, a knife through his left arm, four bullet wounds in his body, two in the lower part of his right leg, a gash in his cheek, and several cuts in his scalp, and other wounds which he called scratches.

For this desperate affray, in which one man whipped ten desperadoes, killing eight of them, the title of "Wild Bill" was bestowed upon the famous borderman, who was unfitted for service for twelve long months. But few other men could have survived such fearful injuries as he received, or come out of an encounter so deadly.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PONY EXPRESS RIDER'S RESCUE.

WHILE Wild Bill, as he is now known to the reader, was riding Pony Express, he had another fearful encounter against desperate odds, which I may as well make known here.

A stock-tender whom wild Bill was very much attached to, had been placed in charge of one of the most isolated stations on the road, and seeing his solitude the Pony Rider said to him:

"Dick, you ought to get married, and then you would have company in your lonely home."

"I'd do it in a minute, Bill, if I could get off duty to go after a girl I am engaged to," declared the stock-tender.

"Oh! I'll arrange that for you," was Bill's reply as he bounded upon the back of a fresh horse and dashed away.

And arrange it he did, for shortly after an "extra" came to the relay station to take

charge for a week or two, while Dick Talbot went after his wife.

And back to the solitude of the prairie came the young wife with her husband, and they made themselves as comfortable as the circumstances would admit of in that far-away border cabin home.

The maiden whom Dick the stock-tender had married, was a pretty, auburn-haired girl of eighteen, and she was very glad to prepare a meal for Wild Bill, the handsome Pony Express Rider, who each day paid their humble home such a flying visit, as he sped like the wind upon his run of seventy-five miles.

When approaching the station, to warn the stock-tender to have a fresh horse ready, it was the custom of the Pony Riders to play a few notes on the bugle, while flying along at full speed.

One day, as Wild Bill neared the station, he put the small bugle he wore to his lips, and blew a few ringing notes.

But upon dashing up to the door he saw no horse awaiting him, and four strange animals saddled and bridled, and waiting hitched not far away.

At the same time he heard a cry from within the cabin, in the voice of the stock-tender's wife:

"Help! Bill! Help! for the love of God!"

Wild Bill was no man to tarry when a woman called for help, and springing from his horse and drawing a revolver he dashed toward the cabin, at the door of which lay the body of the stock-tender, and with a bullet wound in his head.

Just then a man was coming out, and seeing Wild Bill fired upon him and missed him, while the next minute he fell under the return fire.

Springing over the dead bodies of the stock-tender, and man he had just slain, Bill sprung into the house, to find the young bride struggling in the grasp of two men, who were trying to stop her cries, and to do which, one had raised his revolver to strike her in the head, when a shot broke his arm, and he, with his comrade, and another villain that came out of an adjoining room, loaded down with booty, rushed upon the daring man who had come to the woman's rescue.

There was a rapid exchange of shots, Wild Bill firing with lightning rapidity; and dropping two of the men, while the third, the one he had before wounded in the arm, rushed for the door.

Wild Bill sprung after him, but with a cry the frightened woman threw her arms around him and began to shriek in terror, and in pity of her sorrow, sufferings, and fright, he remained to soothe her, and one of the five escaped with his life.

Wild Bill remained with the poor young

bride-widow until the stage came along, and then mounting a fresh horse dashed on his way, and arrived at the end of his long ride just on time, though he made his horses suffer to do it.

This exploit, which got at once noised about the frontier, and along the overland trails, added still more to the name of Wild Bill, and caused him to be greatly feared by all the desperadoes in that part of the country, for they looked upon him as bearing a charmed life.

CHAPTER XII.

WILD BILL'S DUEL WITH A GAMBLER.

SHORTLY after his last fierce combat, when he went to the rescue of the wife of the stock-tender, Wild Bill gave up Pony Express Riding, to take charge of a Government wagon train bound to Springfield with supplies for the United States Army, for the civil war in America, had just begun.

Upon this trip Buffalo Bill, then a youth in years, accompanied him as assistant wagon-master, and they ran the train into Springfield in safety, and then the two Bills, both splendid specimens of border heroes, went to St. Louis together, where they lost all their money betting on a horse-race.

This financial "bu'st up" caused Buffalo Bill to return to Kansas, while Wild Bill went to the military head-quarters in St. Louis, where he readily secured a position as Government Scout, and was sent to Springfield.

It was not long before he rendered the Government most valuable service, in the capacity of a scout, as he frequently boldly entered the Confederate lines as a spy, and obtained information he could not have gotten otherwise.

Upon his return from one of these bold ventures one night, Wild Bill was paid off by the Government, and going to a gambling saloon, was inveigled into a game of cards with a desperate character.

Wild Bill won the game, and a watch from his adversary, which the latter refused to give up.

Bill demanded it, and said he had to report at nine o'clock the following morning at military head-quarters, and intended carrying the watch he had won.

His adversary, whose name was Dave Tritt, said he had to report at the same time, and would himself carry the watch.

This was equivalent to a challenge to a street duel, and Bill said no more; but promptly the next morning he was on the square, and soon after Dave Tritt appeared.

All knowing of the intended meeting had attended, and, as the two men boldly advanced toward each other the crowd fell back to a position of safety.

Dave Tritt first drew his revolver, and carry-

ing it in his hand advanced at a rapid walk, the other hand being upon the chain to which the watch was attached.

As Wild Bill advanced, calm and dignified, not yet having drawn his revolver, Tritt suddenly raised his weapon and fired, missing Bill, but only by an inch.

Wild Bill, as quick as a flash of light, then drew his weapon and throwing forward his hand, pulled the trigger.

His aim, as usual, was true and deadly, for the bullet struck Dave Tritt squarely in the forehead, and he dropped dead.

Wild Bill walked coolly up to him, took the watch from his pocket, placed it in his own, and going over to where a crowd of Tritt's friends stood, greatly excited, said in his quiet way:

"Gentlemen, do any of you desire to take up this quarrel where Mr. Tritt has left it off?"

Not a soul answered, and Wild Bill then walked over to the military head-quarters and reported for duty, as though nothing had occurred to mar his morning's enjoyment.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILD BILL AS A SPY.

FTER a short stay at army head-quarters, Wild Bill rode away one morning bound on a most perilous mission, which was no more or less than to join the Confederate forces, as a pretended volunteer, and act as a spy.

He was joined on the way by another Union scout, an old friend of Bill's, and a gallant fellow, and the two comrades entered the lines at a given point, and boldly enlisted as soldiers in the army of General Price, who was then operating against General Curtis with a Federal force.

By constant watchfulness and investigation, Wild Bill and Trickett, his spy companion, gained most valuable information regarding the movements of the Confederates, and finding that it was important to communicate at once with General Curtis, they looked about for a means of escape into the Union lines.

But the two armies were facing each other in line of battle, and the heavy guns were firing, and by no means was it an easy task to gain the Union forces.

But suddenly Wild Bill, who had joined the cavalry, said to his comrade:

"Trickett, we must make a break now or never! You have a copy of my dispatches, so let us start and make a bold ride for it, and one of us will get through."

Trickett seemed to shrink from the fearful risk; but Wild Bill was determined, and the two spies, well mounted, started along the lines, as if carrying dispatches, and then suddenly wheeled and bounded their horses over the breastworks and headed straight for the Union army.

At first the Confederates seemed not to understand what was their intention; but an officer called out:

"They are deserters, escaping to the Union lines! Fire on them!"

Volleyes of pistol-shots were then turned upon them, and then followed a discharge of musketry.

At the same time a company of cavalry boldly dashed in pursuit, and the wild ride commenced.

Seeing that the two horsemen in advance were fugitives, the Federals opened a hot fire upon the Confederates, who turned their carbines upon Wild Bill and Trickett, and the latter was seen to throw up his arms and wave them wildly in the air.

Wild Bill immediately dashed up to his side and endeavored to support him in the saddle; but he could not do so, and Trickett fell from his horse, and once more the daring prairie man sped on, and his splendid animal cleared a wide ditch with a mighty bound.

But it was the last effort of the gallant steed, for another volley from the Confederate carbines, and he fell dead, hurling his rider to the ground.

In an instant Wild Bill was upon his feet and flying with the speed of a deer toward the Union lines, just as a squadron of cavalry dashed out to succor him.

Instantly then Wild Bill halted, wheeled and threw forward his deadly revolver, leveling it at a Confederate officer who was far in advance of his men.

With the report the officer fell forward on the neck of his horse, and the animal shying one side, he dropped to the ground, but was dead ere he touched it.

The next moment Wild Bill was safe in the Federal lines, and his secret information was given to General Curtis; but that night, at the risk of his own life, he crept back to the spot where Trickett had fallen and brought his body into camp and buried it on the side of a small stream.

CHAPTER XIV.

SENTENCED TO DEATH.

HAVING met with such decided success, even at such fearful personal risks, in his former expedition as a spy, the general to whose command Wild Bill was attached suggested another trip into the Confederate lines.

Will Bill consented, though well knowing his danger, as on the former occasion he had become pretty well known to the Confederates during his stay of several weeks; but he determined to go in disguise, and accordingly watched his opportunity. He received a backwoods jeans suit, much the worse for wear, an antiquated jackass and revolutionary musket from an old negro, and thus equipped and

mounted, he rode boldly for the lines of the Southern army.

He was received as just what he represented himself, a backwoodsman of the greenest kind, and easily persuaded to enlist, the Confederate soldiers having a great deal of amusement over his supposed verdancy.

But there was one among the Southerners who knew Bill well, and his keen eyes had detected something familiar under the disguise of the pretended backwoodsman, and he determined to keep an eye on him, for he had witnessed the daring escape of the spy on the former occasion of his coming into the lines.

At length he felt convinced of his man, informed an officer, and all of a sudden a score of guns covered the spy, and he was told to surrender, for he was known.

Wild Bill very calmly submitted, for it would be instant death to do otherwise, and he was at once bound securely and imprisoned until a court-martial tried him as a spy.

There was ample evidence to convict him, once the disguise was off, for many recognized him, and the sentence of death by hanging was passed upon him.

Wild Bill was perfectly cool throughout, for his was a nature that never gave up hope while life lasted, and he set about planning an escape to the Union lines, which he knew were not far away.

The night before the day appointed for his execution was one of fearful storm, and the sentinel guarding Wild Bill shrunk under the eaves of the log cabin in which the prisoner was confined to shelter himself from the wind and rain.

Bill was within the little hut, his hands tied tightly behind him and watching with a hawk's eye the movements of the sentinel.

During the day he had, in scanning the prison, noticed an old case-knife in a chink in the logs, and now he arose, turned his back, and grasped it.

Feeling around in the darkness he at last found a knot-hole in a log, and into this pushed the handle of the knife and began to slowly rub the stout cords that bound him against the blade.

The blade was dull, the ropes hard, and it was slow work; but at last the friction severed them, and Wild Bill felt his hands were free.

The sentinel still shrunk back under the projecting roof, and, looking out through the crevices, Bill saw that he was near the door, and called to him to come in and give him a drink of water.

Lazily the sentinel obeyed, for the door was fastened on the outside, and as he stepped within his throat was seized in a gripe of iron, and a fierce struggle ensued.

Unable to cry out with the gripe of steel upon his throat, the sentinel fought with desperation; but Wild Bill was the more power-

ful of the two, and at last drove the case-knife, which had so well served him before, deep into the heart of his foe.

That ended the struggle, and taking the man's overcoat, hat and musket, Wild Bill at once left the Confederate camp, and in the darkness and storm made good his escape into the Union lines.

CHAPTER XV.

▲ SIOUX CHIEF'S TREACHERY.

AFTER the most arduous service in the army, Wild Bill was ordered to go and investigate the truth of a report, brought in to General Curtis, by Conquering Bear, a Sioux chief, to the effect that a large force of Choctaw and Cherokee Indians were preparing to have a general massacre of the whites in eastern Kansas.

"I'll go back with Conquering Bear, general, and see whether he lies like a book-agent, or tells the truth, and if I do not report within a week write my obituary," said Wild Bill.

"I'll send what men you need with you, Bill."

"No, general, Bear and myself will go pard on this trip, and if he deceives me, his hair or mine gets lifted."

That night Wild Bill and the Indian chief started together, and first went to the Sioux camp, where they remained a short time, and then, as darkness was coming on, they departed for the camp of the Cherokee and Choctaw Indians, which Conquering Bear had said were preparing for a general massacre.

Bill desired to find their camps, see how the land lay, and then return with what impressions he had formed, so that General Curtis could take steps accordingly.

Suddenly, as the chief and Wild Bill were riding along in the darkness, Conquering Bear gave a wild war-whoop, and instantly dashed into the forest, just as a score of Choctaws surrounded the scout.

In an instant Bill saw how he had been trapped by the wily Sioux; but he did not stop to consider just then, and at once set his two revolvers going like a talking machine.

His mare, Black Nell, which he had captured from a bushwhacker whom he had killed, bounded forward at the word, and in the darkness and confusion, for they could not tell friend from foe, the scout managed to escape, his usual good fortune not deserting him, and the Indians were compelled to give up the pursuit, besides mourning the loss of three of their warriors killed, while their foe was uninjured.

Bill promptly returned to General Curtis, and reported the treachery of the Sioux, and asked for a leave for a week or two, which was readily granted.

Having made his arrangements Bill started out on his trail of vengeance, and understand-

ing the Sioux tongue gained the confidence of a young warrior, who, for a consideration, agreed to arrange a meeting between Conquering Bear and the scout, who was of course not to be known to the chief.

Expecting to meet a trader, as the warrior had so told him, Conquering Bear went to the appointed spot, accompanied by his red companion, when suddenly they were confronted by Wild Bill who held the drop on the chief, while he smiled pleasantly and said:

"I won't detain you long, Conquering Bear; but you owe me a little debt I am going to collect just here.

"You can pay it with either one of my revolvers, which I will lend you, or your knife, and we'll go to work at once."

The Indian at once saw that he was entrapped and bent a scowling look upon the young warrior, who said:

"Conquering Bear great chief; me thought he want white trailer scalp."

"He doubtless does, only he wanted to take it in his own treacherous way; well, Bear, which shall it be, knife or revolver?"

Conquering Bear chose the knife, and Wild Bill at once laid aside his revolvers.

The Indian then advanced and Wild Bill met him with his blade and the fight began with fearful ferocity.

Conquering Bear was a larger man than Bill, although the latter was six feet two inches, and weighed over two hundred pounds, and consequently they were well matched.

It was a hot, savage fight, and the iron hands of each held his blade so firmly against the other's, that it was impossible to get a thrust home, while their left hands were holding the throat of each other with the tenacity of a bull-dog.

Now and then a sudden change would be made, and then wounds of a slight nature would be received by each.

But at last Wild Bill, tiring of the fight and wishing to end it, left his breast unguarded purposely, and the Indian was quick to take advantage, and made a fierce thrust, which the scout caught on his arm, the blade burying itself in the flesh.

With his knife thus sheathed the Indian was at the mercy of Wild Bill, who drove his own keen blade deep down into the neck of his adversary, who, with a wild death-cry sunk upon the blood-stained ground.

As Bill bent over his foe to take his scalp, he suddenly beheld the young warrior seize his belt of arms and heard the words:

"Me want big white chief now; me got him."

"I guess you can have me, Injun; what shall I do?" quietly said Wild Bill, as he saw his own revolvers pointed directly at him.

"Go to Sioux camp, and me be great chief," was the reply.

"You'll never get there in good health, red-skin," muttered Wild Bill, as he promptly turned and set off in the direction of the camp.

But ere they had gone ten paces the young warrior lowered his revolver, and quicker than a flash Wild Bill wheeled and fired with a Derringer he carried in his hunting shirt, and his captor dropped, a bullet through his heart.

Taking his scalp, and placing it with that of Conquering Bear, Wild Bill quickly bound up his wounds as well as he could, and mounting Black Nell rode for the nearest town as rapidly as his mare could go and was soon in the care of a surgeon, and the report of his duel with Conquering Bear, and his revenge for his treachery, spread like wildfire, and it soon became known that some of the scout's enemies had paid the chief to put him to death.

CHAPTER XVI.

WILD BILL'S INDIAN SWEETHEART.

AMONG the Sioux there was a young chief whom Wild Bill had once befriended, and who was an intelligent Indian and greatly attached to the scout.

Meeting him soon after the duel with Conquering Bear, this young chief, whom Bill called Captain Joe, told his pale-face friend that there was splendid trapping upon the Niobrara river and the adjacent streams, and although the Sioux hunting-grounds were not far away, and he had only lately killed one of their chiefs, he determined to go up there and trap for the season, for pelts were prime, and bringing a large price in the market.

Captain Joe had a half sister, for his mother had married a white hunter after the death of her Indian husband, who was a great chief, a maiden of strange beauty and refinement, for her father had taught her much, and after Bill had established himself in a camp on the Niobrara and set his traps, the Indian and his sister paid him a visit one day.

At first sight of the scout the dusky maiden loved him, and Wild Bill was struck with her beauty and winning ways, and they became great friends, and every few days she would go with her brother to the lonely camp and carry the scout food, and the work of her own hands, for she made him a hunting-shirt and leggings, moccasins, belts and other things which she forced him to accept.

At last, as spring drew near, Wild Bill bade his two Indian friends farewell, and a sad parting it was for poor Maree the Indian maiden, and loading several Indian ponies down with his traps, he set out for Missouri.

Feeling that she was deserted by Wild Bill whom she felt did not love her, though he had

ever treated her most kindly, the red-skin maiden married a handsome young Indian trader from St. Louis and went with him to St. Louis to live.

As ill fortune would have it Maree met Wild Bill in the streets of St. Louis one day, and all of her love for him returning, she seemed to fairly hate her husband, who became jealous of her, punished her severely in a fit of rage, and set out to kill the scout.

But Wild Bill had gone off suddenly with a western bound train, not to return for some time, and the husband had to be content to nurse his jealous rage until the scout should get back.

Remembering how her husband had treated her, and really without cause, loving Wild Bill more desperately than ever, and fearing that she would be killed by her jealous lord and master, Maree determined upon revenge against the man she had married, and to save the life of the one she loved so madly.

Watching her opportunity she put poison in her husband's food, and when she saw that it proved fatal, she fled from St. Louis back to her people, hoping Wild Bill would seek her there.

But in this she was mistaken, and after waiting in vain for his coming for one whole year, she went out to the forest, sought a lonely spot on the banks of a small stream, dug her own grave with the utmost coolness, and then laying down in it took her own life by driving a knife, which Bill had given her into her heart.

She had asked some Indian maidens to seek her there at sunset, and there, to their horror, they found her dead, and upon her bosom a letter which was addressed to the scout.

Her mourning brother, Captain Joe, gave the letter himself to Wild Bill, who read it with deep emotion, consigned it to the flames, and never made its contents known to any human being.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FIVE-HANDED DUEL.

GOING up into Nebraska on a trapping excursion, Wild Bill one day in Jefferson county, stopped at a wayside tavern, the resort of the few wayfarers that traveled that wild region, and cowboys who lived on the cattle-ranches in the vicinity.

In the saloon of the tavern as he entered, were a score of half-drunken men, some of whom were desperadoes of the worst type, and only longing for an excuse to get up a fight.

They did not know Wild Bill by sight, though there was not one among them who had not heard of his wonderful exploits. But he was a stranger, and that was sufficient for a row, and the bully of the bullies at once fastened his eyes upon him, and as the scout called for a drink, stepped up and said:

"No stranger, pard, comes in these parts that don't treat the gang all round."

"I was just about to ask you all to join me; but since you demand it, I'll see you damned first," was the cool reply, and pouring out his liquor Bill raised the glass to his lips, when the desperado promptly knocked it from his hand.

Instantly Bill sent his right fist outward, and over and over the bully rolled as though a mule had kicked him.

This was the *casus belli* at once, and the three friends of the desperado instantly drew their revolvers; but some of the herders wishing to see fair play, called out:

"Hold on, pard! four ag'in one hain't Nebraska style."

"I don't mind the four, if they come single-handed," was Bill's quiet response.

"No, we fights four at a time, stranger pard, so you've got to light out and show yourself a coward, or take us in a bunch," said one.

"Very well, only let us have a square deal: the bartender give the word, and you four gents stand in a row ten feet apart, and about fifteen paces from me."

This bold proposition was listened to with amazement and delight by the spectators, and all adjourned outside.

Then Wild Bill insisted that the four desperadoes should put aside all weapons except the one each was to use, and that only one shot should be allowed in that, and he would carry but four in his revolver.

The men took their stands, the crowd retreated to one side, and the umpire bartender gave the word:

"One, two, three, fire!"

At the word two pistols flashed, and Bill dropped the man on the left, while he received a shot in the right arm, that knocked the revolver from his hand, and a second shot passed over his head as he stooped for it.

Seizing it in his left hand, and he was equally as dead a shot with that, he hastily shot the man on the left, and then, although struck by a bullet in the leg, never missed his unerring aim, and brought down his other two foes.

Three of the men were dead, shot through the brain, and the fourth had his jaw broken and is still living.

As for Wild Bill he was at once a hero, and his wounds were dressed with rude kindness; but he did not like the neighborhood, and as soon as he was able mounted Black Nell one night and set out for Kansas City, where the story of his duel with the four desperadoes had already preceded him.

But his wound in the arm reopened, and he was confined to his room for a couple of months, when he joined General Primrose in his march against Black Kettle, a Cheyenne

chief that had lately been committing atrocious barbarities in Western Kansas.

On the same expedition, by a different line of march, General Carr went, and Buffalo Bill was his chief of scouts, while Wild Bill acted in the same capacity for General Primrose, and none doubted but that, with two such heroes, the Cheyennes would be trailed to the bitter end.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAVED BY BUFFALO BILL.

AFTER a long trail after the Cheyennes, the two commands of Generals Carr and Primrose met and were consolidated, and Buffalo Bill was made chief of scouts for the entire command, with Wild Bill as second chief under him, and soon after the red-skins were come up with on the Wachita river, in the Indian Territory.

Black Kettle had encamped in a strong position near the Antelope Hills, and had fortified his village so thoroughly that Buffalo Bill, who went on a scout alone, returned and stated that it would take desperate fighting to dislodge him.

He had a large force under him, among them being bands of young bucks from the Arapahoes and Kiowas, who had joined their fortunes with the great Indian general, having full confidence in his abilities to outwit and defeat their white enemies.

The battle began by an attack both in the front and rear, and unexpected this maneuver, the red-skins were driven from their outer lines, and being rapidly followed by the soldiers, were pressed back at all points, and the fight became one of great fierceness.

But the Indians were stubborn, and several times checked the gallant charge of the cavalry, until presently Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill dashed up with their scouts and took the Indians' position and beat them back.

Rushing to the spot to rally his flying warriors, Black Kettle was spied by Wild Bill, who at once dashed forward to his side.

The red chief and scout were both mounted, and having emptied his revolvers, Wild Bill seized Black Kettle by the throat, and in spite of his savage resistance, drove his knife to his heart, and then tore the scalp lock from his head, in the very midst of his warriors.

But Wild Bill was wounded in the thigh with a spear, by the chief, and reeled in his saddle, and would have fallen, or been killed by the warriors pressing around him hot for his life and scalp, when, seeing the danger of his old friend, Buffalo Bill, with his ringing war-cries, and a revolver in each hand, spurred forward, opened a lane through the Indian ponies, and reached the side of Wild Bill.

A few rapid shots, a shout to their horses, and the two scouts dashed out from among

their foes, and were greeted by wild cheers from the soldiers and the scouts, who had seen their danger and yet been unable to aid them.

Wild Bill was found to be seriously wounded, the spear-head having been poisoned, and he was taken back to camp, while the soldiers, pressing on, gained a complete victory, few of the warriors escaping, and the village of Black Kettle and the squaws and children falling into the hands of General Carr.

As his wound, and those he had received in his five-handed duel, and with Conquering Bear, gave him much trouble, Wild Bill determined to once more go to his boyhood's home, from which he had been absent nearly fifteen years, and there he found a warm welcome from his family, to the hero of a hundred fights, who had begun his remarkable career by entrapping wolves on the banks of the Vermilion Creek when but a little boy.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOING THE COUNTRY A SERVICE.

WHEN Wild Bill fully recovered from his wounds, he went on a visit to Chicago, where, being dressed in buckskin, he was one night set upon in a billiard saloon by a party of roughs, who wished to try his pluck, and with his fists alone he soon showed the gang that they had waked up the wrong passenger.

Not liking city life Bill returned once more to the border, and because he aided in the capture, at the request of a constable, of a desperado by the name of Strawhan, he was threatened with death by that personage.

Bill little dreaded the threat, but hearing that Strawhan had been released from jail, kept his eyes open for him, and one night saw him quietly enter a saloon where he was standing at the bar with a party of friends.

A glance showed Bill that his enemy meant mischief, and without showing that he knew of his existence he kept his eye upon him.

The man got a position behind Wild Bill, and was drawing his revolver to kill him, when with the rapidity of a flash of light the scout had his revolver out and Strawhan was a corpse.

Soon after a desperado of the worst kind, by the name of Mulloy, started on a rampage through Hayes City, ran off the officers who tried to arrest him, and just "took" the town, and Wild Bill was appealed to to calm him.

Bill went up to the rum-maddened man and said:

"Mulloy, come with me."

"Guess not; while I hold these trumps you don't win," and the desperado held up his revolvers, covering Bill's head and heart.

Wild Bill never flinched, but said calmly, as though addressing some one behind Mulloy:

"Boys, don't kill him."

Instantly Mulloy glanced quickly over his

shoulder, and it was his last act on earth, as Bill sent a bullet from his Derringer through his brain, and the citizens congratulated the scout on his fine work, thanked him for doing the country a service, and at once unanimously elected him to the position of marshal of Hayes City.

CHAPTER XX.

A FIGHT WITH SOLDIERS.

As Wild Bill was considered the very personification of reckless courage, the citizens of Hayes City were more than delighted in electing him marshal of their town, and looked forward to a sudden improvement in the tone of many of its desperadoes, and from the way he had begun with the hard characters, there was every reason to believe that their expectations would be fully realized.

One mile from Hayes City was Fort Hayes, where General Sheridan had his head-quarters, and here were congregated a number of soldiers, who soon took a dislike to the new marshal, as he did not allow them to "run the town" when they came into it.

Among the soldiers who hated Wild Bill, and had sworn to get even with him, was a huge sergeant some six feet four inches in height, weighing two hundred and thirty pounds, and the best man in his regiment in a fight.

One day the sergeant came into Hayes City bent on trouble, and resorted to the saloon of Paddy Welsh, a well-known character, and, with the score of soldiers who had accompanied him, began to get drunk.

As he continued drinking the sergeant got worse and worse, and soon began to smash furniture, knock citizens down, and rampage generally.

But Wild Bill in his capacity as City Marshal arrived on the scene and quietly remonstrated with the "military terror," as he was called.

The response was:

"What's yer weight, Long Hair?"

"Enough to handle you, sir, if you render it necessary," was the cool response.

"Then I'll make it necessary and see," said the sergeant, and he made a lick at Bill, which the latter warded off, and then followed up with a blow that sent the sergeant to the floor.

Maddened with rage, he sprung to his feet and again fell, from a terrific blow that met him squarely in the face.

Again he arose, to again get felled, and then over a dozen soldiers, at the sight of their sergeant being whipped, rushed upon Bill.

Loudly he warned them off, but on they came, and the next instant the fight began in all its fury.

Pistols were drawn and used, billiard cues were snapped in twain and made to act as clubs, and knives were slashing about; but in

the fierce *melee*, Wild Bill shot straight home where he aimed, and three soldiers fell dead, and three more sunk in their tracks severely wounded, while seven times wounded himself, Wild Bill retreated to Smoky river near by and swam across.

Here he hid in a thicket, and, though suffering severely from his wounds, which he bandaged as well as he could, remained for two days in a freezing atmosphere, and then managed to crawl to the ranch of a friend living half-a-dozen miles from Hayes City.

From this friend, Ben Williams by name, Wild Bill learned that he had been considered drowned in the river; but as this was uncertain, General Sheridan, who had heard only the soldiers' side of the story, had issued an order to take him dead or alive.

It was a long time before Bill's wounds healed, and then, as he knew he would only have trouble with the military, which he was anxious to avoid, he went to the Republican river, upon a novel expedition, the motive of which will be given in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NOVEL VENTURE.

THE motive that carried Wild Bill to the Republican was, as I have said, a novel one. for it was to capture a few buffaloes, with which he intended to proceed to Niagara Falls; where, with Comanche Indians to aid him, he was to give a wild style of entertainment to the public, which he thought would pay largely for the amusement offered them.

With three assistants Bill went on his buffalo hunt, and found a large herd upon Beaver Creek, and at once laid his plans to capture the six bulls he desired.

Though an expert buffalo killer, he had never taken any of these animals alive, and his plan to do so was a strange one.

Mounted well, armed with his rifle and pistols and a number of lassoes, he dashed into the herd, and was soon in their very midst, as they swept at full speed over the prairie.

Finding that his horse did not work well, Bill boldly deserted him for the back of a huge bull, that went snorting and plunging on with rage and fright.

His assistants now became alarmed for his safety, and began to dash in among the herd and try to turn them, so as to separate the one Bill rode from the others; but he shouted:

"Keep off, all of you, and I'll lasso the whole herd."

From his seat on the bull's back he soon threw his stout lariats and managed to secure firmly five more of the herd, and all large, shaggy brutes.

With their horns entangled in the lassoes, and then made fast to the bull he bestrode, the

captured buffaloes were now forced to drop back from the herd, which swept on, leaving Wild Bill and his captives behind.

His assistants then came up with his horse, and the six buffaloes were more firmly secured with lariats, and hopped, and then driven, with great difficulty, however, to Ogallala, and from thence taken by the Union Pacific to Omaha, where they were to await the coming of Wild Bill, who had gone after the rest of his menagerie, the Comanche Indians.

In a few weeks he returned with four warriors, a large bear and huge monkey, the latter two animals being pets of the braves, and the entire party set out for Niagara.

A place was secured to keep the Indians and buffaloes until the day advertised for the chase, and then they were turned loose in a long enclosure, which was surrounded by an immense crowd to witness the fun.

At a signal the Comanches not only started in pursuit, but a number of gentlemen who were visiting the falls, and innumerable dogs, and it became a lively and interesting sight.

But the crowd, left to contribute or not, as they pleased, did not come within many hundred dollars of making up expenses, and bills stared Bill in the face, until some mischievous fellow unmuzzled the bear and turned him and the monkey loose, and the very Old Nick was to pay.

To sum up all, the bear, the monkey and the buffaloes were sold, and the showman and his Comanches started for Kansas, and a wiser and a sadder man after his unfortunate experience, Wild Bill went to Abilene, where he was at once elected marshal.

CHAPTER XXII.

KILLING A FRIEND.

WILD BILL had seen hard enough service as marshal of Hayes City, but Abilene he found that the former place was a paradise to it.

Among the noted characters of Abilene was a gentleman of the name of Cole, who, a good enough fellow when sober, was a perfect devil when he got drunk, and was guilty of all kinds of acts of mischief and brutality.

One day, accompanied by a pard, who was also a good fellow when not drinking, Cole started up the street on one of his rampages, and Wild Bill, the marshal, and his deputy, McWilliams, and also his intimate friend, started to arrest them.

To save bloodshed, McWilliams, knowing well the character of the two men, approached Cole and begged him to submit quietly, and a burst of anger being the response. Wild Bill drew his revolver and demanded his surrender.

Cole's reply was an instant shot at Bill, and McWilliams catching his arm, the bullet missed its mark, and before the fire could be returned

he turned the deputy suddenly around before him.

Just at that moment Wild Bill's finger touched the trigger, and his bullet pierced the heart of his friend and deputy marshal, killing him instantly.

But not losing his presence of mind at this, he again fired at Cole, who just then leveled his revolver a second time at him, and the ball plowed through his brain.

But the fight did not here end, as Cole's friend shot at Wild Bill, and with such perfect aim that his bullet grazed the scalp; but it was his last shot, for Wild Bill opened on him almost at the same instant, and sent the ball through his heart.

Then Wild Bill turned to the crowd, as though expecting further trouble, but found that the fight had ended, and, as usual, in his favor.

The killing of his friend touched Wild Bill most deeply, for he had regarded McWilliams as one of his best friends; but as it was a case of pure accident he could not be blamed for it in that wild community.

Finding that the two men he had slain left no means, Bill, with his accustomed generosity, buried them at his own expense, thereby winning greater favor with the people of Abilene.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD FOR A HEART.

In a fight at Abilene with some herders, shortly after the affair in which he had killed his friend McWilliams, Wild Bill seriously injured one man who, while rolling upon his bed in suffering, swore to have his life.

After months of illness he recovered, and then set about to keep his oath, by getting around him a band of desperadoes and offering them the reward of five thousand dollars for the heart or scalp of Wild Bill.

There were many desperate men who longed to win this reward, and accordingly eight of the band undertook the job, determined to win.

Their purpose was to catch Bill when all were together, for they dared not meet him when they were alone, and then attack him en masse.

But they got drunk, one half-way divulged the plot, and it reached Bill's ears, and they met on a railroad train, as they learned he was going to Topeka.

Finding where they sat, Bill suddenly entered the car, a revolver in each hand, and confronting them, cried out:

"Move an inch to draw a weapon, pard, and I fire, and you know I don't waste powder."

They were finely caught, and in great alarm,

for they knew well the man: but he gave them no chance for thought, and continued:

"There's the door, pards, and the baggage car is next, and you can't get into it, so move."

"You haint agoin' ter—" begun one.

"I am going to make you leave this car and at once!" was the calm reply.

"But she's runnin' twenty mile a hour."

"All the same, go!"

Pell-mell they went, for each expected a shot, and they knew Bill's unerring aim.

Out of the door, onto the platform, and then the jump, with Wild Bill following them to the steps, they took, and on swept the cars, leaving them to their fate.

One of the eight was killed by the fall, and the others more or less wounded, and they at once gave up their intention to win five thousand dollars by killing Wild Bill, and so told the one who had hired them to do the red work.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RIVAL'S FATE.

AMONG the friends of Wild Bill was a young lady in Abilene, who held a very soft spot in her heart for the famous Dead Shot Hero, as he was called by many.

Whether Bill cared for her in return was never known; but there were many suitors for her love, and among them one who greatly feared that Hikok might become his successful rival.

To prevent this he one night determined to pick a quarrel with him and kill him.

The place found to carry out his purpose was a ball-room, and he went up and claimed the lady for a set which he declared she had promised to dance with him, hoping Wild Bill would resent it.

But instead, Bill simply said he left it with the lady to decide which she would dance with, and she promptly took his arm.

This so maddened the jealous rival that he determined to still longer bide his time, but in the end take Bill's life, when he could do so without certain death to himself, for he well knew the marshal's deadly aim.

Business calling Wild Bill to a neighboring town, the rival followed him there, and finding that he had gone to a certain restaurant, thither he went also.

Glancing in at the door he saw Bill seated in an alcove, having just ordered his dinner.

His back was to him, and he felt that at last his opportunity had come to end the days of his rival.

Stepping quickly into the door, he drew a revolver, and gliding up to Bill, raised his weapon to fire.

But at that instant, in a glass on the wall, Bill saw his act, and threw himself upon the floor, and the bullet plowed through the table

in a direct line, showing that it would have passed through his body had he not moved.

As he dropped under the table Bill drew a revolver and almost instantly came the sharp report, and then the heavy fall of his would-be murderer, who met the death he would have brought upon his successful rival, and at that rival's hands.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN AVENGER ON BILL'S TRAIL.

VISITING Hayes City again, Wild Bill, in 1870, was reappointed to the position of City Marshal, for the place had not become wholly a paradise, and was still the resort of many desperate characters who needed firm handling to keep under, when elated by bad whisky.

He had been but a short while in town when he was secretly fired at, and narrowly escaped with his life.

Bill was dismounted, and his intended assassin well mounted, and hence pursuit was useless and the man escaped.

Again he was fired upon through an open window, and the marshal's shield, worn over the left breast, turned the ball, and once more the would-be assassin escaped.

A third time he was fired upon, and from an ambush.

He was riding into town, and out of a thicket came the flash and ring of a rifle.

At the flash the horse threw up his head and caught the bullet in his brain, thus saving his rider.

Down in his tracks sunk the horse, and before Wild Bill could extricate himself, away went a steed and rider like the wind.

Who this untiring foe was Wild Bill could not guess; but had he been in any doubt as to the fact that one was on his track who wished to avenge some one he had killed, a slip of paper pinned on his door one day would have dispelled that doubt.

It was written in a bold hand and read:

"WILD BILL:

"An avenger, for the death of Cole at your hands, is on your trail.

"Your days are numbered.

MERCILESS."

Bill read this warning without the quiver of a muscle; what he felt and thought his stern, sad face never revealed.

But others who read it, for Bill left it sticking where the avenger had put it, felt that whoever it was that was trailing Wild Bill, had better be careful or the biter might get bitten.

Going to Wichita in pursuit of a criminal, Wild Bill had just entered the saloon of the tavern, when a horseman dashed up, threw his reins over the hitching rack, to which the marshal's horse was fastened, and entered the room, glancing quickly around him as he did so.

Spying Bill he advanced toward him and asked pleasantly:

"Are you the marshal of Hayes City?"

"I am."

"Your name is Bill Hikok, I believe?"

"My name is James Hikok, but I am called Wild Bill," was the calm reply.

Instantly a revolver was thrust in his face and the flash and report followed, as the stranger cried:

"Then I avenge Phil Cole."

Bill was fairly caught, for the air of the stranger deceived him; but he was as quick in his movements as the lightning's flash, and managed to strike up the weapon so that the bullet glanced upon the frontal bone, but left a severe wound, and felled him to the floor like dead.

In fact, those who saw him fall thought he was dead, and sprung toward him, while the stranger dashed out of the tavern, mounted his horse, and sped away unpursued.

But, only stunned by the bullet, Wild Bill quickly rallied, and asked for his intended as assassin.

He mounted his horse and rode away," said the landlord.

"Which road did he take?"

"The trail leading south."

"I shall follow him," and he arose to his feet.

"But you are seriously wounded, bleeding freely, and are not able."

"You don't know Wild Bill, pard, if you think he is not able to follow a foe."

Wild Bill!

The name created a sensation there at once, for no one knew him, among that crowd, by sight, yet all knew him well by reputation.

Covered with blood, which he wiped from his face with his handkerchief, and binding it around his head, he left the room, mounted his horse and dashed away in pursuit.

Riding hard, he came in sight of a horseman after a couple of hours in the saddle, and recognized him as the man who had come up to him in the tavern in such a friendly way.

The stranger, believing he had certainly killed Bill, had slackened his pace, but turned upon hearing hoofs behind him.

Instantly, in that wild, blood-stained face, he saw an avenger on his path, and rode away in hot haste.

But Bill's horse was the fleetest of the two, and coming nearer, he opened with his revolver and soon brought down the animal ridden by his foe.

Dismounting quickly, as the other fell, Bill rushed upon him, and receiving unhurt the fire of his enemy, shot him dead.

Maddened by his wound, he coolly took a lock of hair from the head of the dead man, rode back to the tavern, placed himself in the

care of a surgeon, and upon his return to Hayes City, tacked the death trophy up by the side of the warning of the man who had been determined to hunt him down.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WILD BILL FALLS IN LOVE.

It was while Wild Bill was Marshal of Hayes City, that a circus came there to give an exhibition, and of course it was an exciting event for the town.

The circus was owned and managed by Madam Agnes Lake, the first Mazeppa rider I believe in the United States, and whose husband, the former proprietor, had been killed in Missouri.

Madam Lake, though the first woman at the head of a large show, managed it with the greatest ability, and thus saved herself and her daughter from financial ruin after the death of her husband.

As is often the case, when a circus visits small southern and western towns, some of the "characters" of the place decided to "clean it out," and assembled under the canvas for that purpose, anxious to start a row.

Madam Lake had heard that a bad lot were coming, and advised her troupe to keep quiet and orderly; but this would do no good where there were idle desperadoes bent on a fight, and they began to insult the circus men in various ways, and at last, when one of them resented it, at once pitched upon him.

Others came to the rescue of their comrade, and a hot fight began.

But suddenly into the midst of the combatants sprung a tall form, his fists fell right and left like sledge-hammers, and sent men to earth at every blow, and having gotten the desperadoes separated, he drew his revolvers and said quietly:

"Now, pards, git!"

They knew that the one who gave the advice was Wild Bill, and they took it and "got." Bill then turned to the circus men and said:

"Go on with the fun, boys, for we won't be disturbed again."

Madam Lake having seen Bill dash single-handed into the fight, and single-handed end it, and drive the mob before him, asked to have him presented to her that she might thank him, and he was taken up and introduced by a friend.

The madam received him most kindly, presented him to the members of her company, and from that meeting Wild Bill lost his heart with the fair widow, and years after, while he was performing with Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack upon the stage, he again met Madam Lake, and they were married in Cheyenne, for the lover's persistent wooing at last won a wife.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANECDOTES OF WILD BILL AS TOLD BY BUFFALO BILL, HIS LIFE LONG PARD.

BUFFALO BILL having had a Border Play written for him, in which he had an opportunity of showing those living in the marts of civilization true life upon the prairies of the Far West, prevailed upon Texas Jack, a noted Plainsman, and Wild Bill to accompany him in his dramatic tour, and the two celebrated Men of the Plains and Mountains appeared before the footlights in the drama known as "Scouts of the Plains."

In his autobiography, a handsome book published by Frank E. Bliss, of Hartford, Buffalo Bill thus speaks of

WILD BILL AS AN ACTOR.

"ALTHOUGH he had a fine stage appearance, was a handsome fellow, and possessed a good, strong voice, yet when he went upon the stage before an audience, it was almost impossible for him to utter a word. He insisted that we were making a set of fools of ourselves, and that we were the laughing-stock of the people.

"Wild Bill was continually playing tricks on the members of the company, and it was his especial delight to torment the 'supers.' Quite frequently in our sham Indian battles he would run up to the 'Indians' (the supers), and putting his pistol close to their legs, would fire at them and burn them with the powder, instead of shooting over their heads. This would make them dance and jump, so that it was difficult to make them fall and die—although they were paid twenty-five cents each for performing the 'dying business.' The poor 'supers' often complained to me about this, and threatened not to go on the stage and be killed again if that man Wild Bill did not stop shooting and burning their legs. I would order Wild Bill to stop his mischief; he would laugh and then promise not to do it any more. But it would not be long before he was at his old tricks again.

"My company, known as the 'Buffalo Bill Combination,' did a fine business all through the East. Wild Bill continued his pranks, which caused us considerable annoyance, but at the same time greatly amused us.

WILD BILL INTERVIEWS ROUGHS.

ONE day at Titusville, Pennsylvania, while Burke, the business agent, was registering our names and making arrangements for our accommodation, several of us started for the billiard room; but were met by the landlord, who stopped me and said that there was a party of roughs from the lower oil region who were spreeing, and had boasted that they were staying in town to meet the Buffalo Bill gang and clean them out. The landlord begged of me not to allow the members of the troupe to en-

ter the billiard room, as he did not wish any fight in his house. To please the landlord, and at his suggestion, I called the boys up into the parlor and explained to them the situation. Wild Bill wanted to go at once and fight the whole mob, but I persuaded him to keep away from them during the day.

In order to entirely avoid the roughs, the members of the company entered the theater through a private door from the hotel, as the two buildings joined each other. While I was standing at the door of the theater taking tickets, the landlord of the hotel came rushing up and said that Wild Bill was having a fight with the roughs in the bar-room. It seemed that Bill had not been able to resist the temptation of going to see what kind of a mob it was that wanted to test the pluck of the Buffalo Bill party; and just as he stepped into the room, one of the bruisers put his hand on his shoulder and said:

"Hello, Buffalo Bill! we have been looking for you all day."

"My name is not Buffalo Bill; you are mistaken in the man," was the reply.

"You are a liar!" said the bruiser.

Bill instantly knocked him down, and then seizing a chair he laid out four or five of the crowd on the floor, and drove the rest out of the room. All this was done in a minute or two, and by the time I got down-stairs, Bill was coming out of the bar-room, whistling a lively tune.

"Well!" said he, "I have been interviewing that party who wanted to clean us out."

"I thought you promised to come into the Opera House by the private entrance?"

"I did try to follow that trail, but I got lost among the canyons, and then I ran in among the hostiles," said he; "but it is all right now. They won't bother us any more. I guess those fellows have found us." And sure enough they had. We heard no more of them after that.

WILD BILL PLAYS A LITTLE GAME.

Another incident occurred, one night, at Portland, Maine. Bill found it impossible to go to sleep at the hotel on account of the continued talking of some parties who were engaged in a game of cards in an adjoining room. He called to them several times to make less noise, but they paid little or no attention to him. He finally got up and went to the room with the intention of cleaning out the whole crowd. He knocked and was admitted; greatly to his surprise, he found the party to be some merchants of the city, whom he had met the previous day. They were playing poker, and invited him to join them which he did, at the same time pretending to be a little green about the game; but he ended largely a winner, and at daylight left them

with the parting advice never to keep a stranger awake and then invite him to play poker as a recompense.

WILD BILL'S INDIAN ACT.

Buffalo Bill also speaks of a fancy which Wild Bill had, when discharging his revolver in an imaginary fight upon the stage, of singing the "supers" (supernumeraries) who were painted and dressed as Indians.

When any of them fell, and were supposed to be dead, killed by the scout in the mimic combat, Wild Bill would fire his pistol so near to them, that he would scare the "supers" to life again, thus making a "live Injun" of a dead one.

In referring to it in his autobiography above alluded to, Buffalo Bill says:

"The play proceeded finely until the Indian fight in the second act, when Bill amused himself by his old trick of singeing the legs of the 'supers.'

"After the curtain dropped the 'supers' complained to me about it. Bill's conduct made me angry, and I told him that he must either stop shooting the 'supers' or leave the company. He made no reply, but went to the dressing-room and changed his buckskin suit for his citizen's dress, and during one of my scenes I looked down in front and saw him elbowing his way through the audience and out of the theater. When I had finished the scene and had retired from the stage, the stage-carpenter came up and said:

"That long-haired gentleman, who passed out a few minutes ago, requested me to tell you that you could go to thunder with your old show."

"That was the last time that Wild Bill and I ever performed together on the stage. After the evening's entertainment I met him at the Osborn House. By this time he had recovered from his mad fit and was in as good humor as ever. He had made up his mind to leave for the West the next day. I endeavored to persuade him to remain with me till spring, and then we would go together; but it was of no use. I then paid him the money due him, and Jack and myself made him a present of \$1,000 besides.

WILD BILL AS A "STAR."

Bill went to New York the next day, intending to start West from there. Several days afterward I learned that a theatrical manager had engaged him to play. A company was organized and started out, but as a "star" Wild Bill was not a success; the further he went the poorer he got. This didn't suit Bill by any means, and he accordingly retired from the stage. The company, however, kept on the road, using Bill's name and employing an actor to represent him not

only on the stage but on the street and elsewhere. Bill heard of this deception and sent word to the manager to stop it, but no attention was paid to his message.

So he determined to take satisfaction himself, and accordingly went to the town where the combination was playing and bought himself an orchestra seat far forward, and sat down to witness the performance.

When the bogus Wild Bill, representing himself, appeared, Wild Bill sprung upon the stage, slung the manager into the orchestra, and hurled his impersonator through a mass of scenery representing rock, and which, fortunately for him was only painted canvas.

Wild Bill then resumed his seat, and a policeman was sent to arrest him.

"How numerous are you?" calmly asked Wild Bill of the officer.

"I am alone," was the reply.

"You had better get some help," said Bill. The officer then called up another policeman, and Bill again asked:

"How many of you are there now?"

"Two," was the reply.

"Then I advise you to go and get some more reinforcements," said Bill, very coolly.

The policeman thereupon spoke to the sheriff who was dressed in citizen's clothes. The sheriff came up and said he would have to take him into custody.

"All right, sir," replied Bill, "I have no objections to walking out with you, but I won't go with any two policemen." At the court next morning Bill stated his reasons for having acted as he had done, and the judge fined him only three dollars and costs.

STAGE WHISKY.

Buffalo Bill also told the author of these incidents and adventures in the life of Wild Bill the following amusing story of the latter's first appearance on the stage:

"We had several rehearsals together," said Buffalo Bill, "and of course the stage properties were not used, only 'make believe,' so he could understand what was to be done.

"But the night he appeared, the first scene in which he took part represented a camp-fire, around which Texas Jack and myself were sitting telling stories. In order to carry out the scene so that it should be a faithful counterfeit of the reality, we had a whisky bottle filled with cold tea, which we passed from one to the other at the conclusion of each story. When it came Bill's turn to relate an adventure I passed him the bottle, and taking it in the way with which he was very familiar, he commenced draining the contents. I say commenced, because he stopped very suddenly and spurted the tea right out on the stage, at the same time saying, in a voice loud enough for the audience to hear him: 'You must think I'm

the worst fool east of the Rockies, that I can't tell whisky from cold tea. This don't count, and I can't tell a story under the temptation unless I get real whisky.' I tried to remonstrate with him, while the audience fairly shook down the galleries with their cheers. At first I was greatly mortified and provoked; but I soon discovered that in the few words he had said, and his real acting of disgust, Wild Bill, unintentionally on his part, however, had made a great hit."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAVED BY A LOOKING-GLASS.

HAVING found that as an actor he was not a success, Wild Bill returned West to the haunts he so well loved, and at once became aware, through certain hints that were dropped, that another avenger was on his trail.

Who it was he did not know for some time, and then only discovered it by accident, as he sat reading one morning in a saloon in Cheyenne.

Two men entered, and as Wild Bill's face was hidden by the newspaper, did not recognize him, and as they stepped up to the bar one said:

"You are sure he will come here!"

"Yes, I was just told by Jack Dunston he had made an appointment to meet him here within an hour."

Wild Bill heard their words, and knowing that he had just made such an appointment with the party named, knew that they referred to him.

Instantly he determined to face the music boldly, when he saw, by a looking-glass over the bar, that they had recognized him and were both drawing their weapons.

At once he drew his double-barreled Derringer and sprung to his feet, just as a shot whistled by his head, and another struck the table by which he sat.

To reply was the work of a second, and one of his enemies dropped dead; but the second barrel missed fire, and hurling the pistol at the remaining man, grappled him, and they fell, and Wild Bill arose unhurt, while the neck of his adversary was broken from having fallen with such force upon his head.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ONE OUT OF FIVE.

UPON one occasion Wild Bill and four comrades started on a prospecting tour into the Black Hills country, which was then reported as being rich in gold mines, several old trappers and hunters having been there and discovered traces of the precious metal, which all said would pan out fortunes for those who mined for it.

The companions of Wild Bill on this trip were men in whom he had the greatest confi-

dence, and for whom he felt strong ties of friendship.

They were all thorough prairie and mountain men, were up to all the wiles of the Indians, and had stood up without flinching in many a desperate encounter.

Thoroughly equipped for mining and hunting, well mounted and armed, and leading three pack-horses with their stores, they set out for the new Eldorado.

Well they knew that they were going into a dangerous locality, where the Indians, imbibited by the invasion of their hunting-grounds by the whites, would show them no mercy.

But they were men who had confidence in themselves, and the golden results they hoped for outweighed the danger, and willingly they took the risks.

Pitching their camp on French River, they set to work with a will, and built a secure and comfortable cabin, with a stable adjoining for their horses, and then began the task of prospecting for gold.

It was the rule of the party that one of the five should remain about camp all day or hunt near it and do the cooking, providing game, and looking after the horses, while the other four went to the mines.

Taking turns, this work in rotation fell upon all successively, and as they had agreed to share the results of their mining labor, they got along most harmoniously.

The party thus had passed some months together, and were meeting with considerable luck, when one day it was Wild Bill's duty to remain in camp.

He got things to rights, had made all preparations to get dinner, and then started out to find it, by shooting the game.

Intent in creeping upon a herd of deer, he went further and further from camp, and when he at last brought down a fine young buck, he found it was nearly sunset, and that he had some ten miles to walk back to camp with his load.

Taking what choice parts of the buck he wanted, he shouldered them and started on his return.

Darkness overtook him before he had gone far, but he cared little for that, other than the thought that his comrades would come in from their work and find no hearty supper prepared for them.

Hastening along he had reached a spot but a quarter of a mile from the camp in the canyon, when he was startled by a series of wild yells and rapid shots from revolvers.

Down to the ground was cast his load of venison, for he had recognized the yell of the Blackfeet Indians, whose Reservation they had camped upon, and knew that they had attacked his companions.

For a few minutes the fighting waged hot,

and then ceased, and wild yells of triumph alone were heard.

At this moment Wild Bill appeared upon the scene.

At a glance he took in the situation, and that his absence had gotten his comrades into the ambush, for the red-skins had entered the cabin, and awaiting the return of the miners, had rushed out upon them, and taken by surprise, and overwhelmed by numbers the fight could be but short and have a fatal termination for the whites.

Wild Bill, under ordinary circumstances, would have held back when he saw that the fight was ended; but now he was angry with himself for having gone so far from camp, maddened at the loss of his comrades, and observing that two of them, though lying upon the ground, were not yet dead, he determined that they at least should not die with the belief that he had deserted them.

With a revolver in each hand, and with yells that rung back savagely from the canyon's sides, he rushed upon the scene.

Ere the astonished Indians knew what had happened half a dozen of their number, had fallen dead before his unerring aim, and the remainder, more than a score in number were seeking shelter, as they felt confident that one man had not alone charged in upon them.

Reaching the side of one of his comrades, he saw that he had just breathed his last, and a second was dying, and his scalp was gone.

Recognizing him, he said plainly: "It is all up with us, Bill; save yourself, for it's four out of five now."

Wild Bill was in a frenzy of rage, and as a horse was near he threw himself upon his back and charged through the canyon unhurt by the fire of the red-skins, several more of whom however he brought to grief with his revolvers.

He had disappeared from sight before the Indians realized that he was alone, and then, with wild yells of rage and disappointment they started in pursuit, the blazing cabin which they had set on fire, lighting the canyon from end to end.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CHASE.

PRESSING the horse he rode to his utmost speed, Wild Bill kept him at it until he felt that he needed rest, and then came to a halt and remained in camp until day light.

He well knew his dangerous situation, alone and almost without ammunition, with hostile Indians not only on his trail, but others hating the pale-faces, all around him; but he did not despair, as he was a man who was game to the end.

Many long miles lay before him ere he could reach the nearest settlement, and the horse he

rode was not of the best; but still he counted that as long as he lived there was hope, and he determined to take the chances and the hope.

He was anxious to reach Fort Fetterman, and having breakfasted upon a sage hen, which he knocked over with his revolver, and his horse being rested, and content with his feast of grass, he mounted and started in the direction in which his prairie-craft told him the fort lay.

He had not ridden very long before he felt that in the darkness he had thoroughly eluded his pursuers, and that after waiting until daylight before they could find the trail, they would hardly continue the chase, as it would be useless, with eight hours' start which he had.

But this thought was not much relief, for he knew the country was full of both Blackfeet and Sioux, and the attack upon the miners' cabin proved to him that they had at last gone on the war-path to drive all of the whites out of their country, and the chances were ninety-nine to a hundred that he would run upon a band of them at any moment.

He was going quietly along when his horse suddenly started forward, and, glancing back, Bill discovered some fifteen mounted Indians close upon him.

At a glance he saw that they were Sioux, and had evidently only a short while before struck his trail and followed it.

Instantly he urged his horse into a run, and at once the chase began, for the red-skins came on in rapid pursuit, yelling like demons.

Pressing the animal hard, Wild Bill held his own for an hour or more, but then his horse began to fail, as he readily saw, while the Indian ponies, tough as pine knots, came on at the same untiring gallop they had commenced the pursuit with.

It now was urgent for Wild Bill to depend upon his own strategy to escape rather than his horse, and he at once closely observed the nature of the country around him.

Observing some high, rugged hills, he urged his tired horse for them, and at their base the animal stumbled and fell, throwing his rider over his head.

But Wild Bill had been fearing and watching for just such a tumble, and, nimble as a cat, he caught on his feet and continued the flight on up the hill.

The Indians dashed by his fallen, broken down steed, and, pressing on up the steep hill, gave a sudden yell of triumph as they saw him hesitate, then stop, dart one way, then another and then turn and face them.

With shouts of triumph and war-cries they rushed upon him, while he waited until they got within range, and then his revolvers opened, one held in each hand.

Down went a pony there, off fell a red-skin

hers, and in almost ten seconds of time, three mustangs and two warriors were down, and the revolvers were empty.

This the cunning Indians discovered, and, where their charge had been temporarily checked, they again rushed forward with rage at the loss of their comrades, and a most earnest desire to get the scalp of Wild Bill, whom several of them recognized, having faced him in many a fight before, and well knew his terrible aim.

But, as they advanced, confident now of their prey, Wild Bill gave one long, loud shout of defiance, and sprung backward and disappeared from sight.

Upon arriving at the spot the foiled red-skins discovered that he had been standing on the edge of a precipice, which overhung a foaming torrent, rushing at its base, sixty feet below.

From this dizzy height Wild Bill had boldly taken the leap, and the rushing waters had received him in their bosom and hurled him on unhurt down the stream, and out of sight of his foes.

For several miles Wild Bill kept in the foaming torrent, borne along with frightful rapidity and then looked about for means of getting out, for he was almost prostrated by his fierce struggle.

A little way back he had passed a good landing place, but preferred to go on further and look for another; but now he found himself in a dangerous predicament, for the stream here ran through precipitous sides, where it was impossible to find a landing, and there came to his ears the roar of a cataract ahead.

As fortune seems to ever favor the brave, there hung over from the banks above a network of vines, several of the larger ends even touching the water, and at once Wild Bill determined to use these as a means of escape.

As he neared them he raised his hands and took firm hold, and though the shock was a great one, and parted some of the smaller vines above, it held him securely, and he dragged himself up out of the stream and managed to reach a place where he could rest.

Having done so, he crept up the vines and thence along the network to the cliff above, and in a sheltered nook sunk down almost prostrated and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MATCHING INDIAN CUNNING.

WHEN Bill awoke, from his sleep of deep prostration, after his battle with the torrent, he found that it was dark, and not being able to know what kind of locality he was in, he felt forced to remain until daylight, as any movement might precipitate him over a precipice. "I'm awful hungry, and could eat an Injun porterhouse steak," he muttered, "but

I don't think even a red-skin can follow my trail the way I came here, so I'll just remain and see what daylight will bring.

"I guess I'll sleep and forget how hungry I am," and, all wet and hungry that he was, he soon sunk again into a deep slumber.

The sun, struggling through the dense undergrowth, that covered the banks of the river, fell into the face of the tired man and awoke him, and his first utterance was:

"Jerusha! how hungry I am: I guess I've had sleep enough to give a little for grub."

Rising, he felt at first, as he expressed it, "stiff as a stove-up old cavalry horse," but creeping out of the bushes he soon limbered himself up by a walk; and peering cautiously around him, went in search of something to eat, and with considerable anxiety not to be discovered by the Indians, who he seemed to feel had not given up searching for him.

Fortunately for him he had six cartridges for one revolver, and they had been in an oil-skin tobacco pouch, and were not wet.

Loading one of his revolvers with these, which he prized as though each shot was a diamond of rare value, he continued his way, several times tempted to kill game that he saw, but each time forbearing, as he feared the redskins might hear the shot.

"I've got one shot for something to eat, and five for the reds; with the one shot I must get game large enough to last me to Fetterman, which I can make in four days, if the Indians will only let me, and I've got just two matches to start a fire with, so I'm forced to be economical for once in my life," he said with a grim smile.

At last, feeling that he was out of ear-shot of the stream, and discovering a deer, he crept near enough, and raising his revolver fired.

It dropped with his unerring shot, and Bill lost no time in cutting off meat enough to last him for several days, after which he started on, anxious to get away from the vicinity of his firing, in case any Indian had heard it.

He had just turned into a canyon, when around ahead, almost upon him, dashed a mounted warrior.

Though expecting Indians to appear at any time, Bill was taken by surprise, but did not lose his presence of mind.

The red-skin was also taken by surprise, and tried to suddenly wheel his horse, having no weapon in his hand, and his rifle being slung at his back.

But Wild Bill bounded forward, seized the rein of the pony, and at the same instant pulled the trigger, as his pistol muzzle pointed full at the head of the savage.

With the report the Indian dropped to the ground, and wrenching from his back the rifle, it was but the work of an instant for Wild Bill to throw himself upon the back of the

frightened mustang, for the clatter of coming hoofs reached his ears, and he knew that the warrior had not been alone.

"I'll give 'em a surprise as they round the bend," he muttered, and raising the rifle, as several mounted Indians came in view he fired.

A mustang dropped, and its rider fell heavily, and dashing the now useless rifle away, for he had no more ammunition for it, Wild Bill turned to fly.

Instantly the red-skins, who had drawn up at his shot, came on in pursuit, and looking back the fugitive saw that they were over a score in number and not those who had been in chase of him before.

"The woods are full of 'em, and from present prospects Fort Fetterman seems about ten thousand miles away, for I'm blest if I know which way to go," he muttered.

But all the time he kept his captured pony at full speed, and presently came in sight of the very stream that he had scuttled down so swiftly the day before.

He recognized the place he was approaching as the spot he had thought of landing upon, and at once he saw to venture into the stream would be to go to his death, for the bank on the other side was a smooth cliff, and a hundred yards below the shore upon which he stood was also as precipitous.

To turn back now he saw was impossible, for the Indians were close at hand, and already their bullets were patterning around him, and plunging into the water.

"Guess I've got to have it out right here," he muttered.

But, as he turned to face his foes, a sudden thought flashed through his mind, and he urged his horse down the bank, until he came to the last point on that shore where he could enter the torrent.

Then he said, with a grim smile:

"Pony, I guess we'll take a sail, and if I don't mistake you'll have company."

Into the foaming torrent he forced the frightened mustang, and the next minute he was sweeping along at a terrific rate just as the red-skins dashed up to the spot.

"Come on and get my scalp!

"Oh, you red-skin cowards!

"You are afraid to follow a white man!

"Come on and I'll meet you below!

"You are a pack of cowardly squaws, and no warriors!"

These taunts he shouted back in the Sioux tongue, which he spoke well, and, as he had expected, they had the desired effect, for the Indians forced their ponies to take the water, and the next minute the whole party were flying along with the current, in pursuit.

"They don't know this country, and what a nocio I've got for them around the bend, or

they'd never have followed," said Bill, as his pony was swept on, fifty yards in advance.

Anxious to steady their horses the red-skins had all they could do and only hoped to overtake the white hunter on solid ground.

But, as they swept around the bend, and observed that the banks on either side were solid walls of rock, they seemed to realize their danger, and some of them vainly urged their ponies to attempt to stem the torrent.

But the effort was a futile one, as they at once saw; and they vented their fury with wild yells of hatred.

Suddenly they felt that another danger faced them, for they heard the roar of the cataract ahead.

"Oh! they hear the music now, and I guess they are mad," said Bill.

But a moment after he saw that he must look to his own safety and carry out the sudden thought, which had seized upon him, just as he was about to turn and fight the red-skins back upon the bank of the stream.

"If the grape-vine breaks, I'll be in at the picnic too," he said, and then he guided his pony toward it.

Nearer and nearer he came, and freeing himself from the Indian saddle, and slipping onto the back of the pony behind it, he stretched forth his hands for the grasp upon the vines.

When almost upon it the pony suddenly swerved, and nearly made him lose his grip; but springing upon the back of the animal with his feet, he gave a jump and seized the stout vine.

It cracked and gave badly under the shock; but hand over hand he went to a place of safety, and felt that the net-work would hold his weight.

"But it won't hold two, nor will this fancy bridge stand many more such pulls," he muttered, and then added significantly, "I'll see that it don't get any more such pulls either."

As he spoke he drew his revolver, with its five loaded chambers, and sat swinging upon his bridge of vines, and waiting.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PLUCK WINS.

AFTER drawing his revolver, and seeing that the Indians were yet quite a distance away, Wild Bill glanced after the pony he had just deserted, and said sadly:

"It's a hard trick to play on you, old horse, after you have saved my life; but my life is more precious to me than yours is."

He saw also, from his lofty perch, that the stream tumbled over a fall of some fifteen feet, and below was one mass of ragged rocks through which it rushed with fury, and looked like a torrent of milk, rather than water.

white was the foam as far as the eye could reach.

"That will settle 'em I know; now to business," and he turned to the Indian who was guiding his pony so as to allow him to grasp the vine as he went under.

"I should have cut those off with my knife as I came up; but I guess this will do," he muttered, and raising his revolver he fired, just as a red-skin grasped the vine.

Into the surging waters, without even a death-cry went the warrior, and a second swept by, not daring to catch at the vine.

But a third got his hand upon it, and he too fell from his pony, with a bullet in his brain.

A fourth, fifth and sixth then went by, and then another made the desperate attempt, and his arm dropped, broken at the elbow.

"I've only got two more shots, and I hope they won't try it again," said Bill.

And they did not, for those who came behind seemed to be more in dread of the deadly aim of their pale-face foe than of the cataract ahead, and swept by under the vine.

Some had fired at Wild Bill, and one or two bullets had come uncomfortably near to him; but the Indians had all they could do to look after themselves in the seething torrent, and soon discovered that all their prowess and courage could not save them.

Climbing onto the rock bank, Wild Bill ran along it until he came to a point where he could see the fall, and with a grim, stern face, he saw his foes hurled over and over to destruction, Indians and ponies being dashed to pieces against the ragged rocks.

Again he then started on his way toward Fort Fetterman, and after a walk of several hours shot a young deer, for he had had to lose his venison in the flight.

His matches did not fail him, and after cooking enough of the juicy meat to last him for several days, he continued on his way, traveling by night and sleeping by day, and after five days of hardships reached the fort in safety, but fearfully used up by his exposure and rough usage.

After a rest of a few weeks he returned to Cheyenne, the only survivor of the party of five that had left there for the Black Hills, and it was while in that city that he married Mrs. Lake, who, to the day of his death, was a most loving and noble wife to him.

CHAPTER

THE DEATH OF WILD BILL.

As all careers must have an end, so at last came the end, and a bitter one, to Wild Bill, for he fell by the hand of an assassin when in the very prime of his eventful life, having just passed his fortieth year.

He had gone with a mining expedition into the Black Hills, and had every prospect of digging a fortune of yellow gold out of the earth, when one afternoon he entered a saloon and engaged in a game of cards with a young man by the name of Jack McCall, and who was in fact, a mere boy in years.

As Bill was the winner in the game of chance, McCall treasured against him a desire for revenge, though he did not then exhibit ill-feeling toward him.

But he plotted to cut short the life of Wild Bill, and to carry out his purpose, several days after he met with his loss, he went to a place where he knew his victim was enjoying a sociable game, nodded pleasantly to all as he entered, and made his way to the back of his intended victim.

Then, suddenly drawing a revolver, he placed it against the back of Wild Bill's head and fired.

Through the massive skull the bullet crashed its way, and buried itself in the arm of Bill's partner in the game of cards.

Wild Bill, without a groan or sigh, sunk dead across the table, the hero of a hundred combats cut down in his strength by the hand of an assassin whom he believed a friend.

After killing Wild Bill, McCall made good his escape, but eventually surrendered himself; an impromptu trial was held, and the jury pronounced the murderer "not guilty."

But, although he left Deadwood after his strange acquittal, Jack McCall was afterward arrested by a United States Marshal, and he was tried, found guilty, sentenced and hanged.

In a romantic spot in the mountains Wild Bill, his rifle by his side, his revolvers ~~twisted~~ around him, was buried by his friends, and above his lonely grave Charlie Utter, "Colorado Charlie," erected a marble monument, upon which is his name, date of birth and death, and the words:

"Pard, we will meet again in the Happy Hunting Grounds to part no more."

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